





# CHONGFEI MANUAL

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EPUB CREATION BY LISA HAYES

# Chongfei Manual

(宠妃使用手册)

by

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# Synopsis

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Before her rebirth, Wei Luo was an innocent little girl.

After rebirth, she appeared lovable on the outside but was a different person on the inside.

Those who learned of her true nature yielded to her.

Only the prince regent regarded her as a treasure; no matter how much he pampered her, it was not enough for him.

Anything she wanted, he gave her, including the princess position that she didn't want, which he stubbornly pushed onto her.

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# Chapter 1

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During the month of March, it was raining incessantly in the capital city Sheng. The continuous drizzle had kept up for two weeks.

The maidservant Jin Lu awoke from an afternoon nap and looked all around the room, only to discover that the fourth miss had disappeared. Her drowsiness immediately vanished.

Just now, the fourth miss had still been sleeping on the southern window arhat bed. How could a person disappear like that? She stood up in a hurry, took an oil-paper umbrella to go outside, and prepared to call Jin Ci and Jin Ge to search together. After taking one step through the threshold, she saw a five or six year old girl sitting under the glazed tiles.

The little girl was wearing a lush green short jacket embroidered with gold and a flowery skirt below. This tiny person had a delicate profile, with thick long eyelashes. Her pink lips were pursed. She resembled a porcelain doll. Her hair was gathered in a bun, wrapped by a red silk ribbon with two hollow gold bells below it. As she heard voices, her head turned and the tinkling of bells sounded along with her movement.

Her eyes were beautiful, like a ray of sunlight breaking through the clouds to fall on a clear lake, glittering and bright.

Jin Lu sighed with relief when she saw the little girl was alright. Even her tone was relaxed, “Miss, why did you come out? It’s raining, you may catch a cold if you’re not careful!”

Wei Luo didn’t speak, but looked at her in silence, then quietly turned her head.

She kept staring at the rain outside. Regardless of what Jin Lu said, there was no response.

This made Jin Lu a little worried. Since the fourth miss had

gotten a fever yesterday morning, she hadn't been herself. Before that, she was a lively little miss who loved to laugh, her glib mouth worked non-stop. How was it that for these two days she had fallen silent so suddenly?

Did her brain burn up?

The thought just flashed through, when Jin Lu darkly spat out. What nonsense! The fourth miss had always been the most clever.

But what was it today?

She could not figure it out, but didn't try to persuade her further. She took out a cloak with cherry-colored brocade from the house, and put it on Wei Luo, while muttering casually: "It's been raining for more than ten days, who knows how long it will last."

Every March, the capital would be under endless rain, also making the rooms very damp and uncomfortable. Jin Lu only spoke casually and didn't expect Wei Luo to answer. After all, she was a six year old child, what would she know? She probably thought the rain was fun, therefore wanted to run outside.

But Wei Luo was actually listening. She showed a faint smile, revealing her snow white teeth, and finally said: "Tomorrow, the rain will stop."

She smiled, and two shallow dimples showed up on her cheeks. Coupled with a pair of bright black eyes, her appearance was sweet and naïve, making people unable to look away.

But today that smile looked somewhat wrong. In what way, Jin Lu was unable to say. In short, it was different from before. Before, when the fourth miss smiled, it would be more eye-catching than the wild rose in the courtyard. The old master liked her smiling face the most, because it could infect people and improve their mood. But not today. Although she was smiling, it seemed filled with resentment, a ruthless glint in the eyes, the whole body shrouded in a gloomy aura.

Could a small child know what hatred was?

“How does Miss know?” Jin Lu was startled. She was just about to take a closer look, but the girl stopped smiling, turning her head to continue staring at the rain outside.

Resting her chin on her hands, she said carelessly: “I guessed.”

Jin Lu was about to press further, but gave up.

Must have seen wrong, Jin Lu thought. The fourth miss had been living in the residence from an early age, and had never forged enmity with people. How would she learn to hate people? Besides, she was so small. Smiling, Jin Lu changed the subject: “The kitchen just made almond jelly. Miss, do you want to eat it with osmanthus syrup, or brown sugar syrup?”

She finally showed an interest, as thought for a while and said with a smile: “Osmanthus syrup!”

Sure enough, she had a child’s disposition. Mention anything delicious, she’d forget everything else. Jin Lu let her wait there for a moment, and went over to the kitchen.

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After Jin Lu left, Wei Luo put on the cloak to sit under the porch for a quarter hour.

As she was leisurely shaking her feet, the red satin shoes with a peony pattern got damp. She bent down, taking a cloth to dry the shoes, but it couldn’t dry them well. Finally, she decided to simply discard the cloth. It couldn’t dry the water, might as well get drenched.

In an instant, she remembered her past life.

Jin Lu had guessed well, she truly was not the same Wei Luo.

In the first place, she thought her life had come to an end. It was unexpected that she would close her eyes and return to her six year old self. Her life had been very unhappy, full of grief. When she



died, her heart had been filled with hatred. A do-over was probably the gods' gift to her.

Ah Luo was born in the Duke of Ying's residence as the fourth miss. Her father, Wei Kun, was Duke Ying Wei Zhangchun's fifth son. Ah Luo had a twin, a younger brother named Wei Changhong. There was a big sensation when they were born. The old master was so delighted, he ordered the streets sprinkled with sweets, and the banquet he threw lasted for three days and three nights. Ah Luo and Changhong did not have a mother, so their father married a second wife early on. The second madam, Du Yueying, was the maternal niece of Count Zhongyi's wife. She had just married into the Duke's family, when she soon gave birth to a daughter – Wei Zheng, only a year younger than them.

Madam Du treated Wei Luo very well, loved her as her own daughter, always thinking of her...

Of course, that was for appearances' sake.

Ah Luo thought herself very silly before. Obviously, she was not her biological mother, how could she love her the same?

Madam Du was nice to her on the outside, letting her eat and dress well, but secretly planning how to harm her and her younger brother. At that young age, during the Shangsi Festival (March 3), Madam Du took her to a remote forest outside of the capital. The slave traders were already there, waiting for her, while she was still stupidly asking Madam Du where to go play.

After she discovered the danger, it was too late. She was a tiny six year old girl. Facing these many adults, there was nowhere to run. Madam Du caught up with her near a brook and let two old servants surround her from either side. Afraid that she might run away and tattle, in order to stamp out the source of trouble, she strangled her neck and threw her in the river.

The scene of Madam Du tightly gripping her neck, she couldn't forget until now.

So strange, so hideous.

Thankfully, Ah Luo had good luck. She didn't drown, but floated down the river to a village, where she was found by a farm couple, who later adopted her.

She, the fourth miss of the Duke of Ying's residence, had turned into a peasant's daughter all of a sudden. In that way, she lived until she turned 15. 15 years old was the marriageable age, but she didn't want to casually find someone to marry. Thinking of her status, she wanted to return to the Duke's residence to get acknowledged by her relatives.

Also, she didn't understand how Madam Du had explained things to her father, that so many years had passed by without anyone looking for her. She thought if her father saw her, he'd recognize her and take her home.

Unfortunately, she didn't get to see Wei Kun. Her face was disfigured by the mother and daughter pair, and she became a person living on the streets. She got sick on the next day, then woke up in this situation.

Those poverty-stricken, desperate days, really let her feel cold down to the bones.

It was good that she came back, she had the opportunity to change her life. She would clearly know people's true intentions, and would not take the same road as before.

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When Jin Lu came back with the almond jelly, she saw the embroidered shoes had gotten soaked. Taken aback, she passed the tray to the nearby Jin Ci and Jin Ge. "Miss, are you looking at the rain? Is it soothing?"

Jin Ge mumbled: "Hope it soothes her to be good and listen well..."

Jin Lu glared at her, and she quickly shut up.

Jin Lu was the oldest maidservant by Wei Luo's side. She was 13, a few years older than the others. She was also calm and dignified. Whatever she said, the other maidservants had to listen. She was fully dedicated to Wei Luo. Seeing that the rain had gotten heavy, she immediately held her up from the porch: "Miss, let's go inside. If you sit here, sooner or later you'll fall ill..."

Wei Luo lowered her head as the deep-seated hatred in her eyes receded, then looked back up, only a cute smile remaining on her face: "Elder sister Jin Lu, where is Changhong?"

Changhong was younger than her only by an hour. They grew up very much alike, both with a lively character. They were also much closer than ordinary siblings. Usually, Changhong would've already come to visit her, but today he was slow. Ah Luo obviously knew the reason, but couldn't help asking.

Sure enough, Jin Lu explained: "Madam was worried that your sickness may affect the sixth young master, therefore hasn't allowed the sixth young master to come. Miss, if you want to see him, then quickly get better. Then you can play together with sixth young master."

That was Madam Du's plan, often driving a wedge between brother and sister, so Changhong would feel alienated from her. Then even when she went missing in her previous life, Changhong would absolutely not suspect Madam Du. Ah Luo, leaning on her cheek, muffled out: "Alright..."

She didn't display any unusual behavior, so Jin Lu didn't suspect anything.

Ah Luo stretched out her arms to hug: "Elder sister Jin Lu, will you change my shoes? Ah Luo's shoes are wet."

Facing this kind of cute girl's request, how could Jin Lu reject? Even if Wei Luo hadn't said so, she would've still changed them.

"Very well, enter the room along with me, I'll help Miss change

the shoes.” Jin Lu held her hand to go back inside, brought her to sit on the southern window couch, and took off the wet shoes and socks. She used a towel to wipe the white jade-like little feet, and exchanged for another pair of shoes with an interlocking gold embroidery, but still didn’t feel assured. She urged: “Don’t go out looking at the heavy rain next time. If Master knew, he’d be distressed...”

Wei Luo’s hands dropped, as she cocked her head, “Which master?”

These words gave Jin Lu a scare: “Naturally, it’s fifth, fifth Master! Miss, why are you asking?”

Fifth Master was her father, who loved her the most... Did Miss forget?

Wei Luo blinked, “Father loves me dearly, then why hasn’t he come to see me?”

Jin Lu ordered the almond jelly to be served, and scooped a spoonful to feed her, “Master was here this morning, but the Miss was asleep at that time, so you don’t know. He also said, tomorrow he’ll let the Madam take you to Huguo Temple to burn incense to pray...”

She was going to Huguo Temple tomorrow.

Today was March 2nd, then tomorrow would be March 3rd.

Madam Du planned to sell her to the slave traders on that day.

Wei Luo’s eyes grew cold, her small fists shook in the sleeves, her emotions surged, but on the surface she still presented a naïve child’s appearance. She obediently finished eating the entire bowl of almond jelly. As Jin Lu took a silk cloth to wipe her mouth, she raised her head to ask: “Elder sister Jin Lu, I don’t feel very well, can I not go tomorrow?”

Jin Lu actually thought that she had caught a chill just now, and quickly asked people to boil water for a hot bath to drive away the

cold. She had recently gotten sick, so she could not afford to fall ill again. "This matter has been settled three days ago, the master also agreed. The madam is doing it for your sake... Miss, how can you say you won't go?"

Wei Luo did not speak again.

Soon, the hot water was delivered. Jin Lu and the two other maidservants went behind the four mahogany screens to exchange the water, when they suddenly heard the sound of the porcelain bowl breaking. Jin Lu hurriedly ran out from behind the screens, finding Wei Luo standing behind a piece of broken porcelain. The broken pieces had scratched up her small hands, cutting the skin open.

The wound wasn't deep, only a little bit of blood flowing out. Jin Lu made a fuss, pulling a silk cloth to cover the wound, but Wei Luo actually lowered her head to lick, then looked up and said: "Elder sister Jin Lu, I accidentally broke the bowl."

How much did a bowl cost? More than her body?

Jin Lu bent down to pick her up and away from the various broken fragments, leaving the other two maidservants to sweep the floor.

Jin Lu asked anxiously: "Did Miss get injured? Where does it hurt?"

She shook her head and hugged Jin Lu's neck, unwilling to let go.

Jin Lu didn't see her slowly raise a smile, long lashes down, eyes covered in shade, both beautiful and strange.

Since she couldn't avoid it, she'd go.

Madam Du wanted to get rid of her, then why not give her a chance?

She was not the same ignorant little girl as before. Between the two of them, there was a huge account to be settled.

## Chapter 2

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The next day, just as Ah Luo had predicted, the continuous rain that had lasted for two weeks, finally ended. The sky cleared up.

The sunlight was hitting the glazed tiles of the Ying Duke's residence. It reflected into the courtyard, where the trees threw spotted shadows over it, painting a beautiful picture.

The maidservants of Pine courtyard (Songyuan) had finished serving the masters, and already couldn't wait to pick up the colorful jumping rope to play in the garden. Pink coats and azure skirts were swaying back and forth with the rope, the garden was filled with laughter and happy voices. One maidservant was particularly skillful, could both skip rope and kick the shuttlecock. She kicked the shuttlecock in the air, jumped over the rope, then extended a long leg to catch it behind her steadily.

People cheered in unison. The Duke's residence wasn't very strict with the servants, as long as they had completed their tasks and let their masters know, they could play or take care of their own matters.

The maidservants were playing in high spirits, when a little girl wearing a scary green mask suddenly jumped out from under the parasol trees, and ran towards them with open arms: "Boo—"

Several maidservants were caught off-guard and got fooled by her. A timid one directly fell on her butt, her face ghostly pale.

Under the mask, a clear giggling could be heard. Wei Luo laughed loudly and pointed at the fallen maidservant, barely gasping out: "Elder sister Jin Ge is a coward!"

Jin Ge stood up from the ground sluggishly, patted away the dirt on her clothes, and said with an embarrassed face: "Fourth Miss is bullying people..."

The girl raised her hands to untie the strings and took off the

mask, first revealing a pair of lustrous black eyes, then an exquisite fine nose, tender pink lips, rosy cheeks as if carved out of jade. She was wearing a green dress woven with gold threads, standing under the parasol trees grinning. A blossom landed on her bun triumphantly. Placing her hands on her waist, she asked: "I've frightened you with this same mask several times already, and each time you get scared. You tell me, did I bully you, or are you just stupid?"

Clearly only a six year old, but her words were so tyrannical, not giving way to anyone.

The speechless Jin Ge blushed and ran away.

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Wei Luo stood under the eaves, thinking of her old self.

That childishness and naivete was something of the past.

She clearly remembered today's scene. She wore the mask to frighten this group of people, her father and Madam Du came afterwards. Madam Du coaxed her with a few words and led her alone to leave the residence. Wei Zheng stayed home. At that time, she should've found it strange. Madam Du loved Wei Zheng so dearly, why wouldn't she take her to the lively festival, but leave her behind instead?

It was a scheme in the first place, did her father know about it? In the past, she was almost killed by Madam Du, what was his response?

Wei Luo didn't know, but in any case, she hated Wei Kun. Hated that he married a second wife early, hated that she couldn't call her own biological mother, but had to call a cruel and ruthless woman 'mother'. She raised her hands and threw the mask on the stairs, where it got cracked in two.

The servants in the courtyard got alarmed by the noise, one by one stopped their activities to take a look at her.

She was amused, and even jumped on the broken mask, splitting it into more pieces before she stopped. Her father had bought her that mask from the lantern festival, it was her treasure. The mask had really suited her tastes, and she had often brought it out to scare people, just like a child. Now, she didn't want it, only wanted to destroy it.

“Ah Luo, why did you throw the mask?”

A serious question came from behind. Wei Luo turned her head. Not too far from her, she saw two people standing under the veranda. One was her father, Wei Kun, the other—her stepmother, Madam Du. It was Wei Kun who spoke a moment ago.

Wei Kun was wearing a plum-colored loose robe with black bamboo leaves pattern. His face appeared stern, but his eyes revealed a doting expression. He stepped forward, “Didn't you like this mask the most?”

Wei Luo paid no attention. Lowering her head, she stomped on the mask, as if she hadn't heard his question.

Wei Kun bent down to hug her. His lips curving, he said with a smile: “Who made our Ah Luo angry? Tell Daddy, I'll go and take revenge for you.”

Madam Du stood several steps behind. She had put on a coat with hibiscus embroidery, a matching purple dress inside, she was covered in pearls and jade jewelry. There was a smile on her face, but after seeing how much Wei Kun favored Wei Luo, the smiling expression turned somewhat chilly.

Lying on Wei Kun's shoulder, Wei Luo happened to see the change of expression.

Before, she was young, couldn't read people. Even if she saw it, she wouldn't think much. But it was different now. When she looked at Madam Du, she could feel the fake pretense everywhere.

Wei Luo rubbed her face on Wei Kun's shoulder tenderly, using a



sweet soft voice to complain pitifully: “Ah Luo fell sick, but Daddy didn’t come to see me. Daddy doesn’t love Ah Luo...”

The reason turned out to be like that.

How could Wei Kun not love her? Because he adored her so much, when she fell ill, he sat at her bed the whole night, only leaving after she woke up. This heartless thing, only knew that she couldn’t see him after waking up, didn’t know he actually came to visit her several times while she was asleep. Wei Kun sighed, “It’s Daddy’s bad. I should have come to see you a few more times. Ah Luo was right to throw the mask. Your Daddy was wrong.”

Wei Luo looked up, just in time to see Madam Du’s face turn uglier.

Wei Kun’s doting likely made her have a sense of crisis. She was afraid Wei Luo would rob all of his love away from Wei Zheng, hence she was so impatient to sell her. Thinking about it, her father really doted on her more than Wei Zheng, why was that? Both were his daughters, what was the difference?

Wei Luo thought the root of the problem was her birth mother.

Wei Luo didn’t have any impression of her, but fourth aunt had said, that not long after she and Changhong were born, their mother disappeared. Outsiders said that she had died after giving birth, but fourth aunt insisted that their mother wasn’t dead, simply didn’t want to be with them. Once she was gone, no one was able to find her. Fourth aunt further added, that her father really loved her mother, loved to no end. In order to make the old master promise to marry them, he knelt at the ancestral hall for three days and three nights, until he fainted from hunger. In the end, the old master reluctantly agreed.

She learned that after they got married, father spoiled mother unconditionally, and their days passed without a problem. But later, no one understood what had happened, two days after giving birth, she left. Father almost went insane searching high and low

for her whereabouts, looked for three months without any results. Not long after, he took Madam Du as a second wife, and nine months later Wei Zheng was born.

Did he still have mother in his heart? Did he even remember what she looked like?

Wei Luo, buried in Wei Kun's neck, sneered. She'd never seen her mother, didn't have any sentiments about her. But she was a little moved, so she wanted to know why her mother had to throw away both husband and children in the past.

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"Since the mask was broken to pieces, why don't we buy a new one for Ah Luo when we go out today? Do you want to?" Madam Du, who couldn't get a word in until now, proposed with a smile, once she saw Wei Luo quiet down.

Wei Luo glanced at her with cold eyes, the icy look was very unusual coming from a child. Madam Du got a shock, her heart was bewildered by this look. When she was about to examine her more carefully, Ah Luo switched to a delightfully smiling face: "Will Daddy go together with me? Ah Luo hasn't gone out with Daddy for a long time, I want Daddy to keep me company."

Regardless of how much Madam Du stared, she could not see that expression again, did she get confused?

Wei Kun patted her head with regret, "I must go to the Imperial Academy in a bit, cannot keep you company outside."

A few years ago, Wei Kun had become a successful candidate from the Imperial civil service examination. Currently, he was a scholar in the Imperial Academy, busy studying every day, taking exams, he would frequently be unable to come home all day. In the past several days, because of Wei Luo's sickness, he'd spent a lot of time at home. He wouldn't feel relieved, unless he remained by her side to take care of her, so he'd taken some time off.

Nearby, Madam Du relaxed.

Wei Luo laughed on the inside, and held onto Wei Kun deliberately: “Can Daddy bring me to the Imperial Academy?”

Wei Kun thought she couldn’t bear to separate from him, both joyful and helpless, “Daddy has some matters to take care of, I can’t bring you. Be obedient and go with your mother to burn incense in Huguo Temple. By the time you’re finished, I’ll be back home.”

Will be back? If she really went obediently, would she have the opportunity to come back?

Wei Luo, leaning her head, finally looked at Madam Du, “Elder sister Jin Lu said I was still sick, have to bring my medicine on the road. My nurse has the prescription, madam, can I take elder sister Jin Lu and Nurse with me?”

Jin Lu was the maidservant she trusted the most, and Nurse Ye was the one who had brought Wei Luo up. Both of them were wholeheartedly loyal and devoted. If the two of them were by her side, an accident wouldn’t easily happen. Her past self couldn’t read people, had brought Jin Ge and Jin Ci along. She hadn’t known that these two maidservants were already bought over by Madam Du. At the critical moment, while she was getting killed by Madam Du, they had looked on, shivering and hiding away on the sidelines.

Madam Du gaped at her, “What did you call me?”

Wei Luo repeated, “Madam!” (meaning of ‘wife’, but not ‘mother’)

Madam Du threw a glance at Wei Kun, twisting her brows, “This child, she called me mother before, suddenly changed today. What sort of nonsense did the maidservants tell her?”

Wei Kun also asked her what happened. She appeared to understand there was a problem, but not really grasping the

essence, and said: "Fourth aunt said that I have a mother, the madam is not my mother." She held the lower corner of Wei Kun's sleeve, raising her head to ask naively: "Daddy, who is my mother?"

Madam Du looked as if someone had slapped her face, almost unable to maintain her calm expression.

She knew that before he married her, Wei Kun already had a wife. Because her maternal family was backed up by Count Zhongyi's residence, usually nobody would dare mention the first wife, Jiang Miaolan, in front of her. Ah Luo was very outspoken today and didn't watch her words, upsetting her greatly.

A painful light flashed through Wei Kun's eyes, but quickly returned to normal, "Ah Luo be good, madam is your mother. You may not ask this question in the future."

A person, who would choke her daughter to death, was still called a mother?

The corner of her eyes sharpened coldly. Ah Luo decided, even if her mother didn't want Changhong and her, she would never call Madam Du 'mother' again.

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The capital's streets were prosperous. Since the country's founding, Emperor Chong Zhen had ruled fairly. Since he was impartial in administering rewards and punishments, the good order of the capital and several other important cities were properly managed. The common people lived in peace and worked happily, the streets bustled with activity. Sitting in the carriage, the passengers could hear the various business owners calling for customers, as well as the noise coming from the wineshops on both sides of the road.

Wei Luo followed Madam Du into the carriage. She sat near the window and raised the gold-embroidered dark curtain, turning her

gaze to the street.

Madam Du considered it normal for a child to show curiosity towards the happenings on the street, so she left her to do as she pleased. Just thinking how this thorn in her side would soon be gone, the corners of her mouth couldn't help but bend in a smirk.

All these years, she found Wei Luo and Wei Changhong most irritating, but for the sake of her virtuous reputation, she had to maintain the kind facade and do their bidding with a smile. In fact, she was already thoroughly sick of the act. Every time she saw these two children, she would remember she was merely the second wife. Like a needle in her heart, it didn't let her sleep in peace.

Especially Wei Luo. Madam Du couldn't stand Wei Kun's adoration for the girl.

Not only was Wei Luo clever, her bright face was also lovable. She showed off in front of the old master, and stole Wei Zheng's thunder. How could she not be jealous? Although her daughter was not mediocre, compared to Wei Luo, she seemed lacking.

Madam Du was planning for Wei Zheng to have a smooth future and get betrothed to a wealthy family. She only needed to get rid of Wei Luo first, sell her to a distant place, never to come back. As for Wei Changhong, that small child... After she gave birth to a son, she'd find a way to deal with him later.

## Chapter 3

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If she was not mistaken, Madam Du would execute her plans once they were done burning incense, on the way back from Huguo Temple.

Hiding at a certain spot, would be the slave traders Madam Du had already contacted—together two people, a man and a woman, both of them incomparably ugly. At that time, Madam Du hadn't received any money from them, only requested them to sell her as far as possible. It would be best if she wouldn't be able to return to the capital her whole life.

Ah Luo was coming up with a plan step by step, while she followed behind Madam Du.

Didn't she want to sell her? Good, then let her see whether she had the skill to.

Still, she hoped that when the time came, Nurse Ye wouldn't get too scared. She wanted to forever remain an innocent little miss in her heart.

Wei Luo really liked her.

For as long as she could remember, Nurse Ye had taken care of her. Perhaps she treated her even better than her own children. Moreover, when the past Ah Luo had wanted to return home to the Duke's residence to get acknowledged by her relatives, and after the mother and daughter pair had disfigured her face, only Nurse Ye had recognized her and taken her in to look after her. Unfortunately, Wei Luo's body wasn't strong enough and didn't last long. Eventually, she drew her last breath, filled with hatred.

If Nurse Ye had known of Madam Du's intentions, she'd have naturally gone all out to protect her, right?

Too bad she hadn't known, and Wei Luo had died, very pitifully at that.

She wondered whether Madam Du had had any dreams about her when she'd slept at night. Had she been happy to conspire with Wei Zheng to ruin her (Wei Luo's) face? The feeling of cutting someone's skin open must have been pretty good? Wei Luo thought she was a little eager to try it out for herself.

The corners of her mouth lifted, she was obviously thinking of cruel things, yet her face showed a sweet smile.

Wei Luo repeatedly looked out of the window, her eyes sweeping over the surroundings.

There were many people on the streets, coming and going about their business, from the well-dressed rich people to the rags-wearing beggars. Because it was so crowded, the carriage moved slowly, letting Wei Luo look around very carefully.

Along the way, the carriage suddenly stopped. Madam Du's maidservant, Ning Xue, raised the curtain to inquire about the reason. Apparently two carriages had collided, blocking the road ahead, so the driver had to stop near a mask booth.

Ning Xue said: "We were unlucky. Madam, should we take another road?"

Madam Du didn't want to waste time, preparing to nod, "Just as well..."

Wei Luo, who hadn't spoken until now, opened her mouth to say: "Madam, look, there are so many masks here! Ah Luo wants to buy a mask."

Madam Du barely kept a smiling face. Every time Ah Luo called her 'madam', it made her heart feel uncomfortable. Though she wanted to get angry on the spot, she changed her mind as she had to keep deceiving that little girl. The girl was clever, if she discovered something was amiss, then she could make things difficult by running away. Thinking about that, she forced a smile, "Ah Luo, be good, we must go to Huguo Temple to burn incense.

Let's buy the mask after we come back."

Ah Luo shook her head quickly, "No, I want to buy it now!"

She saw that Madam Du intended to refuse, her lips pursed and she changed tactics: "Just a moment ago at home, madam said she'd buy a mask for Ah Luo. A promise must be kept. Did madam deceive me? I must tell daddy!" She knew how to use both threats and persuasion. Seeing that Madam Du's complexion wasn't good, she blinked her bright and clever eyes, pointing at the mask booth nearby, "I'll only buy one... Madam, buy me one. If you do, I'll be obedient!"

Madam Du was overwhelmed by the pestering and considered for a moment. Anyway, the road was blocked for the time being. It would be better to yield to Wei Luo's request, so she wouldn't make trouble later. Furthermore, the servants in the carriage were her own people, while Jin Lu and Nurse Ye sat in another carriage behind them. There was nowhere for the girl to run, so she agreed in the end.

Madam Du said to Ning Xue: "Go and help the fourth miss buy a mask. Don't walk around, come back immediately after."

Ning Xue complied with the order, reluctantly holding out a hand for Wei Luo, "Miss, come with me."

Wei Luo pretended not to see her and avoided the hand. She directly jumped down from the carriage, and bounded towards the mask booth. In a few steps she was there.

Ning Xue was Madam Du's person, since she knew of the madam's plans, she didn't have a good opinion of Wei Luo. After getting ignored by Wei Luo, she humphed and flung her sleeves, following behind her with discontent.

\*

Wei Luo's legs were short, standing in front of the booth, she couldn't see the vendor. She was not in a hurry. Looking and



touching around the various masks, it seemed as if she was taking her time choosing.

In the end, she turned to the person standing nearby and tugged at his indigo coat. Using a sweet small voice, she called out to him softly: “Big brother, I like the mask you’re holding, can you let me take a look?”

The opposite party paused and glanced down, only to see a little kid standing there.

Her hair was in a bun, held up by a silk string and decorated with a pearl encrusted golden ornament. She wore a delicate green dress with persimmon patterns and gilt brocade. It appeared she was a wealthy family’s daughter, a pampered young miss.

He casually caressed the demon mask, and with a deep and gentle voice asked: “Do you want it?”

He was just a youth, yet there was an impossible to overlook noble air about him. His profile gave off a beautiful and gallant impression. Only around 15–16 years old, but he had the bearings of someone, who had weathered many storms. The kind of calm and aloof manner, that others couldn’t imitate. The reason Wei Luo had decided to buy a mask at this point... Of course, it was because of the two bodyguards looming behind the youth. They looked like they excelled at the martial arts.

Wei Luo nodded, “Yes!”

Zhao Jie, who had just returned from Wurong, wasn’t in a hurry to go back to the palace. He’d meant to take a walk around the streets, didn’t expect a small girl would start a conversation with him on her own. Unfortunately, he really didn’t have the patience to deal with children, even if the girl was very pretty. He handed her the mask and prepared to leave: “Here, for you.”

But would Ah Luo let him go so easily? She had come out of the carriage because of him!

He was holding the mask in front of her, hadn't withdrawn his hand yet. Ah Luo grasped his wrist, her small petal-like mouth revealed sharp teeth, and bit down.

Her bite was really heavy, her teeth fully sank into his skin. Soon enough, blood filled her mouth.

Zhao Jie was caught off-guard. He raised his hand to shake her off, but the small girl's bite was too strong, clinging to his wrist stubbornly. His two attempts to shake her off were unsuccessful. The guards drew their swords and rushed forward, not minding that they were in the middle of the bustling street. The blades gleamed with an eerie light under the sun, advancing towards Ah Luo's body. Ah Luo avoided them quickly and hid behind Ning Xue, showing a pair of laughing eyes.

It was an obviously challenging look, as if saying "Come and get me."

Cold light flashed in Zhao Jie's eyes. He looked down at his wrist and saw the deep, blood-stained wound. Thinking he was dealing with a simple pampered young miss, he got careless. He never expected that this small girl had a pair of fangs, viciously gnawing on people.

The bodyguards waited for instructions: "Master?"

Zhao Jie lifted his eyes, staring at Wei Luo, who was hiding behind Ning Xue, "Bring her to me, I want to see what kind of sharp teeth she has grown."

The bodyguards received the order and prepared to act. As for Ah Luo, she ran fast. Even though she was small, her speed wasn't to be underestimated. Stepping on the pedal, she climbed inside the carriage, dropped the dark curtain, and refused to come out.

Ning Xue, who was left behind to face the two bodyguards, mentally complained about Ah Luo. Not wanting to complicate the matters, she had to appease them with a smile: "Esteemed young

master, our family's miss is only six years old. Do not lower yourself to the same level with her..."

A bodyguard wearing black clothes scowled: "Six years old? A six year old can be this vicious? She almost took a bite out of our master!"

Ning Xue knew her side was in the wrong, repeatedly apologized.

Finally, Madam Du got impatient in the carriage and called her to come up. Ning Xue was relieved.

The black-roofed carriage slowly carried on, Wei Luo poked her small head from the window and looked behind.

Zhao Jie was also looking at her, and saw her open her mouth, slowly uttering several words.

"Not, tasty, at all!"

Zhao Jie's complexion changed.

The bodyguard Zhu Geng, who had spoken a moment ago, asked: "Your Highness, do you want your subordinate to bring back that girl, to let you deal with her?"

Zhao Jie was silent, didn't approve, but also didn't refuse.

\*

The carriage arrived at Huguo Temple. Madam Du led Wei Luo into the magnificent main hall, burned incense, prayed, and kowtowed in worship.

Her acting was always thorough. Madam Du, even when anxious, would keep up appearances and follow the custom. After completing all these, they prepared for the trip back. Wei Luo suddenly ran up to Nurse Ye's side, and raised her head saying: "Nurse, I don't feel well..."

Scared, Nurse Ye squatted down to examine her condition, "Miss, where do you feel bad? Didn't your sickness get better? Did you catch a chill because of the wind?"

Nurse Ye was over 30 years old, properly maintained, with regular facial features, better natured than most women.

Ah Luo's mother, Jiang Miaolan, had brought Nurse Ye along after her marriage. Since Madam Jiang had disappeared, Nurse Ye had raised Ah Luo, so she treated her like her own daughter. Now that she heard the child wasn't feeling well, her heart hurt.

Wei Luo wasn't really unwell, only didn't want to ride in the carriage with Madam Du, so she was acting like a spoiled brat to Nurse Ye. In the end, Nurse Ye and Du Yueying gave up, and let her take the same carriage as Nurse Ye, then took the road down the mountain.

Sitting in the carriage, Wei Luo calmed down at once, and hugged Nurse Ye's waist, saying: "Nurse, don't leave me, don't leave Ah Luo alone."

After being together since morning, Nurse Ye figured out Wei Luo didn't like Madam Du. She found it a little strange. Before, although Ah Luo and Madam Du weren't too intimate, there were no feelings of disgust. So what happened today?

She couldn't help remembering the words Ah Luo had spoken this morning: "Fourth aunt said that I have a mother, madam is not my mother."

She sighed. The little girl was probably missing her mother.

With such thoughts, she touched Wei Luo's head lovingly: "I won't leave you. Where would I go if I leave you? When Miss has grown up and gotten sick of me, I'll leave then."

Wei Luo mumbled: "I'll never get sick of Nurse."

Nurse Ye's face showed a warm smile.

The Duke's family carriage rode down the mountain, woods on both sides of the road, the swaying trees rustling and throwing thick shade. As they went in further, it didn't seem like the path they had taken previously. Jin Lu raised the curtain to ask the

carriage driver vigilantly: “This is not the way home, why are you taking this path?”

The driver was already bought over by Madam Du. Lowering his head, he said ambiguously: “It was the madam’s orders. The madam is here to see someone.”

Jin Lu knit her brows and lowered the curtain with some discontent: “What kind of person does she have to meet... In a such a wild and remote place.”

The carriages finally stopped in front of a wooden cabin. Soon after, a maidservant helped Madam Du to get down. Wei Luo peeked through the binds. Not far from the cabin door, stood a man and a woman—the people Madam Du had contacted.

## Chapter 4

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Madam Du didn't consider Jin Lu and Nurse Ye's presence a problem. When the time came, she just had to think of any reason to send them away. Once they were back, Wei Luo would have already been picked up by the couple. Afterwards, it would be even easier... She could say that Wei Luo had gotten lost, that she was nowhere to be found, and was probably snatched by mountain bandits. Then, she would present a grief-stricken look, it might be good to also get a bit wounded. Back home, she would at most be punished by the fifth master. After a while, he would cool down, then this whole matter would have passed successfully.

Only getting punished once would bring her a life-time peace of mind, what a good deal.

In great spirits, Madam Du spoke to Nurse Ye before entering the wooden cabin: "I'll come out for a bit. You look after the fourth miss, make sure she's safe."

Nurse Ye nodded her head: "The madam can leave it to me."

Wei Luo gripped the Nurse's clothes and clenched her teeth, hiding her expression from view. In the past life, Madam Du had entered the cabin, while she had waited outside with Jin Ci and Jin Ge. Not long after, a woman had come out of the cabin, and saying that Madam Du needed her, had brought her inside.

Jin Ci and Jin Ge had been aware of everything, so they had watched her get picked up by that woman, making no move to oppose.

Once she had entered the room, she wasn't sure why, but Ah Luo had felt something was wrong. She'd done her best to break free from the woman's arms and had run out the back of the cabin. There was a brook behind the cabin, and one could get down the mountain following the stream. Knowing that, she had ran in that direction.

Unfortunately, she was too young. She hadn't made it very far, when Madam Du's people had caught up with her. Madam Du had been extremely angry. She'd changed her mind about selling the child, and had grabbed her by the neck, intending to kill her directly. At that time, Ah Luo had been very scared and helpless. She hadn't been able to understand how Madam Du had switched from a kind woman with a smiling face to someone who wanted her life.

She had felt her breath gradually escaping. With tears flowing down her face, she had pleaded with Madam Du "mother, why", "mother, it hurts". It had all been useless...

What had Madam Du said at that moment?

Oh, she'd said: "Quickly die already. Once you're dead, my dear Zheng will be able to live happily."

Was that so?

They wanted to live happily? And the price for that was her life?

Wei Luo showed a faint smile. Madam Du wanted to pave the road for Wei Zheng, but she didn't want to help them along. She turned to Jin Lu and asked: "Elder sister Jin Lu's hairpin is really pretty, can Ah Luo have a look?"

Jin Lu always granted any of her requests. It was just a hairpin, of course she could part with it. She took out the silver jasmine hairpin and handed it to Ah Luo: "This hairpin is sharp. Miss, take care not to stab yourself."

Wei Luo received it, looking up with a smile: "I will."

She would certainly not stab herself, because that hairpin had a big role to play.

Waiting in the carriage, Ah Luo was on her best behavior, not making a sound. She was swinging her feet, holding the small hairpin appreciatively.

Madam Du should already be thinking how to get Jin Lu and Nurse Ye out of the way, what would she come up with? For Wei Luo, secretly escaping was not an option, since it wouldn't reveal Madam Du's plot. Sooner or later, her life would get targeted again. She wanted to cause Madam Du's downfall instead, the bloodier, the better.

Wei Luo pulled on Jin Lu's sleeve, "Elder sister Jin Lu, hasn't the madam come out yet? I'm tired and want to go home, I want to see Daddy..."

Jin Lu stood up and assured her: "I'll go see what happened. Miss, wait here, I'll be back soon."

Wei Luo nodded, blinked, and asked naively: "Why is madam so secretive? Why did she go to speak where we can't hear?"

To others, it may have looked like she spoke casually, but Jin Lu and Nurse Ye actually found some truth to her words. Madam Du's actions had been strange in the first place. Even if they suspected, they said nothing. But with Ah Luo's present reminder, they glanced at each other thoughtfully. Jin Lu climbed down from the carriage and soundlessly arrived outside the cabin.

\*

Inside the cabin, Madam Du was talking with the couple.

The couple wasn't from Sheng. They were slave traders from the Liulin district at the capital's outskirts. The man was called Wuzhou, the woman's surname was Wang. The two of them had a very bad reputation in Liulin district, frequently kidnapping children from the capital, then selling them to various other places. Madam Du came to know them through a wet nurse of hers, who was also from Liulin district and had gotten in touch with them.

Although Madam Du was conspiring together with them, she really couldn't take a liking to those two.



Wuzhou asked: "What should we do about the girl's maidservants?"

Madam Du looked at her newly dyed nails, an eye-catching, brilliant red color, and raised her lips in a smile, "I'll find an excuse to send them away in a bit, only a Nurse will be left behind. Just say I've instructed you to bring in the child, and go grab her."

Wang still had some doubts and didn't feel the act was feasible. Feeling apprehensive, she asked: "Won't they ask questions? Are you sure people won't come looking for her? Once we take her away, it might bring us unnecessary trouble."

Madam Du cast her a sidelong glance, sneering: "Her mother didn't want her, who'll look for her?"

Done speaking, she made Ning Xue take out some medicine out of her sleeve, and handed it to Wang, "If you're not satisfied, then use this to make them faint. I guarantee it'll absolutely go well."

That kind of fragrance was an aromatic sedative. It had the effect of helping others sleep soundly, but if the dose was too big, it could cause people to fall into a coma. Madam Du had prepared everything quite thoroughly.

Sure enough, once she took out that kind of thing, Wang's expression loosened up.

They were all ready to act.

Outside the room, Jin Lu held her breath in rapt attention. Listening to their conversation, her whole body grew cold from head to toe.

The madam actually wanted to sell the fourth miss!

Wasn't she normally very nice and amiable to the Miss, was that all a pretense? She was unexpectedly so vicious.

Jin Lu was shocked, quickly returned to the carriage and succinctly repeated the overheard conversation to Nurse Ye. Nurse

Ye was startled and angry. “The Madam’s heart is truly ruthless!”

Jin Lu pulled her outside, “While they’re still unaware, we should take Miss and escape! We have to report this matter to Master!”

Nurse Ye nodded her head and held Wei Luo to climb down the carriage. Both of her hands trembled, but she held Wei Luo very tightly, her eyes reddening: “My poor Miss...”

Wei Luo was hugging the Nurse’s neck, her intonation was naïve: “Nurse, why are you crying? Why are we walking, we’re not waiting for madam?”

These words made Nurse Ye cry even more bitterly. “Silly Miss, if we wait, the madam will sell you...”

Just before she left, Jiang Miaolan had entrusted the brother and sister to her, to take care of them well. But how did she look after them? She almost lost the young miss!

If it hadn’t been discovered early, what would the girl’s fate have become? Just thinking of the possibility, guilt clutched at her heart.

\*

The people in the cabin heard some noise and came out to check, only to find the carriage empty. The servants and the girl had escaped.

Thankfully, their feet weren’t fast, they hadn’t managed to run far. Madam Du ground her teeth and said to Wuzhou: “Go after them quickly!”

If they managed to get to Weikun and talk, would she be able to lie her way out?

This time she had to take care of Jin Lu and Nurse Ye. Once they were caught, she couldn’t afford to let them off.

Wuzhou, as a man, could run faster. He blocked Nurse Ye next to

a camphor tree, his hands making to snatch Wei Luo from her arms: “Give her to me!”

The vile dark and thin man revealed a mouth full of yellow teeth. Looking at him, Wei Luo felt queasy. How could Nurse Ye give him Wei Luo? Holding her closely, she retreated a few steps. Seeing Madam Du advancing toward them from behind, she couldn’t bear the grief and indignation, and said: “Madam, although the fourth miss is not your own daughter, she is Master’s daughter. She’s the Duke residence’s fourth miss, how could you do this to her!”

Madam Du strolled over to them leisurely, fixed her expression, and said with a dignified smile: “What do you mean? I can’t understand. I just thought the scenery was good, and brought Ah Luo to show her around.” Saying this, she asked Ah Luo: “Do you like it here?”

Wei Luo didn’t care to give her face (show respect for her feelings/honor/image), her head shaking like a rattle-drum: “I don’t like!”

Madam Du approached slowly: “Why don’t you like?”

She was inducing Ah Luo to speak to her, in order to distract hers and Nurse Ye’s attention. While she spoke, Wuzhou sneaked behind Nurse Ye, meaning to cover her nose and mouth with a cloth. That cloth was soaked with the sedative medicine, just a whiff and Nurse Ye would go down.

Wuzhou thought it was going well, but didn’t think the girl would suddenly turn around and glare at him fiercely. Holding something in her hand, she stabbed at his face.

Those clear, unsettling eyes stared at him coldly. Wuzhou was frozen in place, and couldn’t dodge in time—he only realized his face was in severe pain. He cried out and clutched at his face. When he opened his hands to look, they were covered in blood.

Ah Lou had used the hairpin to cut open his rotten face, from the

corner of his eye to the corner of his mouth, the wound was deep and long. A lot of blood flowed out, and the pain would keep him incapacitated for a while.

Madam Du also paused. She didn't expect a small girl like her could be so ruthless and use this much strength. About to speak, she saw Wei Luo swing the dripping with blood hairpin at her. It almost slashed her face, but she retreated in a panic, falling into Ning Xue with a gasp.

Though Wei Luo had just injured someone, she wasn't the least bit flustered. In a cold and innocent tone, she said: "Does madam know him? Ah Luo doesn't like others touching me. Tell him not to touch me, alright?"

Were those the words of a six year old? She was simply insane!

Madam Du's pupils shrank frantically, apparently couldn't withstand the shock. She had thought Wei Luo was an ignorant little girl, but saw such a brutal side to her all of a sudden.

In that moment, she almost wanted to nod and say 'alright'.

Having reached that stage, today's matter wouldn't have a clean ending. Wuzhou was injured on the ground, rolling back and forth. The other maidservants had seen the bloody scene and were scared of the silver hairpin in Wei Luo's hand, fearing that if they approached, they'd get their faces disfigured.

No one dared to approach rashly.

Nurse Ye and Jin Lu were also surprised, however, they thought this was Wei Luo reacting in a desperate situation. They couldn't help but feel she was all the more pitiful.

The leaves shook, the sunshine broke through the trees, casting a mixture of light and shadow on the ground.

There was a person hidden on a tree close by. Having had enough of the show below, he patted his clothes and stood up to jump in the middle of the gathered people.

With a cyan-colored blouse and a vigorous physique, it was one of Zhao Jie's bodyguards. He smiled at Wei Luo through clenched teeth: "Little girl, I've found you."

## Chapter 5

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The man had jumped down from such a tall tree unscathed, it caused the surrounding people to gawk.

Nurse Ye saw him coming straight for Wei Luo, and subconsciously held her even closer: "Who are you?"

Wei Luo hadn't told her about buying a mask earlier. Naturally, Nurse Ye didn't know about the matter of Wei Luo biting Zhao Jie's hand.

But Zhu Geng knew of it. He'd followed their carriage all the way to Huguo Temple, meaning to find an opportunity to teach that little girl a lesson. He didn't care whether he seemed narrow-minded, or like someone who bullied the weak. In any case, he couldn't let this little devil off. Not to mention His Highness' body was such an expensive thing, how could he get bullied in vain? He really didn't expect to witness such an astonishing scene when he followed along.

He had heard Madam Du and the couple's conversation behind the cabin. Originally, this little girl didn't look all that special, but there was a cruel stepmother doing her best to sell her to the slave traders.

A married woman's heart was the most malicious. This saying was certainly not false.

He had felt sorry for the little girl, but hadn't planned to lend a hand. He was just going to watch from the sidelines. However, this small girl really managed to shock people.

She had swung the sharp hairpin without even batting an eye.

Zhu Geng had been squatting on the tree, looking on with interest for some time. In the end, he couldn't take it anymore and had jumped down.

Nurse Ye thought he was one of Madam Du's people, vigilantly

taking a few steps back: “I’m telling you, as long as I’m still breathing, I won’t let you hurt a hair on the fourth Miss’ head!”

Wei Luo was moved by her words. Buried in Nurse Ye’s nape, she cried softly ‘Nurse’, and turned a blind eye to Zhu Geng, ignoring him, as if she didn’t know him.

Truthfully, she did provoke Zhao Jie intentionally, with the purpose of tricking them into following, since their presence would come in handy in the crucial moment. However, it wasn’t required anymore. Even if Zhu Geng hadn’t shown up, she would have been able to deal with Madam Du.

That person had come out of nowhere. Moreover, it looked like his martial arts were excellent. Madam Du noticed his familiar tone with Wei Luo, and thought he was a bodyguard sent by Wei Kun. The Duke’s residence was raising their own personal guards, with each branch of the family having a dozen people assigned to protect them. The idea seemed plausible to Madam Du, so she asked sharply: “Who are you?”

Zhu Geng wasn’t refined and didn’t know how to talk to her politely. He spoke with a grin, “I’m an unrelated person, just want to borrow your family’s Miss for a little trip.”

Madam Du was alarmed: “To go where?”

She had to keep up her act for him; if he was really sent by Wei Kun, he’d bring Wei Luo safely back to the residence. As long as Wei Luo accused her in front of Wei Kun, Madam Du would have lost the lead, and wouldn’t be able to explain herself clearly. She absolutely couldn’t allow him to carry Wei Luo off! With that in mind, her eyes cooled down, “Since Ah Luo came with me, I should naturally bring her back in person. Who are you to interfere?” Done speaking, she turned her head to look at Ah Luo, instantly putting on a kind face, “Ah Luo, were you scared just now? Don’t misunderstand, that man wasn’t going to hurt you. Seeing how pretty you are, he wanted to take a closer look...”

As long as Wei Luo stayed behind, she would certainly be able to find another opportunity to get rid of her.

Wuzhou's wife also jumped in: "Yes, it was a misunderstanding, a huge misunderstanding! Us, husband and wife, are hunters living on this mountain. By chance, our lives were rescued by your family's Madam, wanted to repay our debt of gratitude today. When we saw this lovely young Miss, we couldn't resist picking her up to take a look. Who would've thought the girl would disfigure my husband's face like this... Such a deep wound, what is he going to do in the future..." Then she threw herself on Wuzhou's body to weep bitterly.

Those words were full of flaws, everyone with half a brain could discern the fallacy.

In the first place, Madam Du was from a rich household, it was impossible to get involved with a hunters' family. This kind of identity Wang had invented was so unbelievable, it made people scoff. Just looking at Wuzhou's thin physique, where did he look like a hunter? Nevermind him being able to catch animals, he'd better take care not to become their prey first.

Jin Lu had heard them conspiring with her own ears, but was currently witnessing them playing along with each other, not immediately admitting their wrongs. They were really think-skinned! She said: "Madam, didn't you just say you wanted to sell the fourth Miss to these two, in addition to use that medicine to make us faint... You're doing all that, then you're not afraid of the Master learning about it?"

Madam Du secretly clenched her fists, her nails digging into her flesh. Full of hate for Jin Lu, she feigned anger: "Nonsense! When have I said such disgraceful words?"

Jin Lu stood up with red eyes: "I heard it..."

They were heavily engaged in their dispute, with no one willing to give in. Zhu Geng secretly pondered, that madam was really able



to speak nonsense. It wasn't only the maidservant, he'd clearly heard everything as well. That sedative was also in Wuzhou and Wang's hands. Unfortunately, he didn't enjoy meddling in women's quarrels, his only goal was to grab Wei Luo. While Nurse Ye was distracted, he flashed by her side, quickly reaching her. His hand hooked around the little girl and swiftly pulled her away from the Nurses's arms. He then leapt onto the camphor tree, and in several jumps, disappeared from sight.

Nurse Ye called out in alarm: "Miss!"

\*

Zhu Geng brought Wei Luo to the main road at the foot of the mountain, before he halted in his steps.

He put Ah Luo on the ground and hissed out in pain, holding onto his neck "This little girl, really violent..." There was a newly added scratch on his skin. Just now, Wei Luo had managed to find a chance, and had thrust the hairpin toward his neck. Luckily, he noticed and dodged in time, so that only his skin got grazed. If he really got stabbed, he'd have parted with his life today!

He wondered what had happened to this little child. A normal family's six year old would act like a spoiled brat in their mother's arms, but she was different. Just like a little wolf, drawing blood everywhere.

If his objective wasn't to drag her back to Zhao Jie, so he could sort her out, he would've much rather dropped her right here and left.

Wei Luo, squeezing the hairpin firmly, raised her head to look at him: "My Nurse and my maidservant are still back there. Where are you taking me?"

Near the edge of the woods, a brown horse was waiting, tied to a tree. Zhu Geng didn't answer her. He untied the rope, and placed her in front of him on the horse. "Where? Of course it's to meet

our Master. The teeth you used to bite him with, we'll have to pull out."

He was scaring Wei Luo on purpose, but that didn't mean he wouldn't actually do it. He just needed to see His Highness nod in agreement.

Hearing that, Wei Luo immediately covered her mouth, and regarded him timidly.

Zhu Geng grinned with ridicule. So she knew what fear was, but still behaved like that earlier. Biting so hard, didn't she consider it would hurt their prince?

Zhu Geng frightened her deliberately, so he didn't bother comforting her. He took hold of the reins and urged the horse to speed up.

Huguo Temple wasn't far from the capital, only needing a quarter hour to reach it on horse back. Zhu Geng planned to bring her directly to the Jing palace (Zhao Jie's home), to let the prince teach her a lesson. See if she dared to casually bite people in the future. But the further they went, the more he felt something was odd. The people along the road were watching him, pointing, shaking their heads, and sighing. At first he was very puzzled. Completely mystified, he pressed on to their destination, before he heard a very light whimper. Looking down, he found the small girl's face covered in tears, crying all of a sudden.

Zhu Geng quickly dismounted, and couldn't help but curse. This little girl had kept quiet all the way, so he thought she was behaving. Instead, she was crying secretly. Her eyes were already pretty. Her crying resembled clear water washing over black pearls, beautiful, and made her look that much more sorrowful.

No wonder the passers-by stared at him with that kind of look. Did they think he was a slave trader?

Zhu Geng was taken aback by her change in attitude: "Why are

you crying now?”

Wei Luo wiped her tears away and peeked at him anxiously: “I didn’t mean to bite... My stepmother wanted to sell me, but I didn’t want to go... If I had asked you to save me, my stepmother would have discovered, and definitely wouldn’t have let me off. So I came up with that method...”

Did she mean it was difficult for her, too?

Zhu Geng choked and stared at her speechlessly.

Wei Luo cried even more sadly, her small face worried and covered in tears. The way she was crying was different from other children. Where other children would have tears and snot running down their faces, she was actually crying very composedly, the teardrops falling down in a line, making people feel sad. “I’m sorry... Don’t be angry, I won’t ever bite again... Can you please let me go home?”

Since they were staying still, they attracted many people’s gazes. The spectators took a look at Zhu Geng, then at the pitifully crying Wei Luo, and couldn’t stop shaking their heads one after another.

Their eyes were as if looking at some heinous villain.

Zhu Geng was ticked off, raising his arms to firmly grasp her face, “Don’t cry!”

Wei Luo stiffened at his bellowing. Watching him timidly, she really ceased her crying.

He paced a few steps back and forth. About to open his mouth to speak, he noticed a man with black garments standing in the opposite building. Leaning on the railings, the man slowly shook his head at him twice. That person was called Yang Hao. Together with Zhu Geng, they were the personal bodyguards of the Jing prince Zhao Jie (Zhao Jie is titled Jing). As a personal bodyguard, he was supposed to stick closely to their master. Then Yang Hao showing up at that moment, could only be by Zhao Jie’s

instructions.

Zhu Geng understood. After a pause, he turned around, and pretending to be impatient, asked Wei Luo: “Where is your home?”

Wei Luo sniffed: “It’s Duke Ying’s residence.”

She was a miss from Duke Ying’s residence? Zhu Geng was a little surprised, but didn’t inquire further. He mounted the horse again and headed for the Duke’s residence.

He was staring straight ahead, so he couldn’t witness Ah Luo’s tears dry out in an instant. She blinked, revealing a victorious smile, replacing the earlier aggrieved appearance.

\*

After Zhu Geng returned her to the Duke’s residence, he watched Wei Luo enter inside, then rode away.

He had thought that Wei Luo was at most a rich family’s daughter, but she was actually the Duke Ying’s granddaughter. The Duke’s house held considerable prestige in the Imperial court, his conduct was strict and upright, the older generation was among the most noble and charismatic. He managed his official duties with thorough analysis, but looking at today’s events, he didn’t appear to be capable of managing his family’s affairs... The granddaughter was schemed against by the stepmother and almost got sold to slave traders, all right under his nose.

Zhu Geng returned to the Jing palace, heard from Yang Hao that the prince was looking for him, then headed directly for the rear court study.

Zhao Jie, having changed into a white robe with dark persimmon stems pattern, was sitting behind the table with his head lowered, but wasn’t reading. He was fiddling instead with a pot of golden-thread orchid, that the imperial physician Cheng Yong had delivered earlier today. That orchid was precious, from a very rare

variety. Cheng Yong had spent a large sum to acquire it from the South. Taking care of this type of orchid was quite demanding, but he had the interest, so he didn't find it troublesome.

Everyone in the Imperial court knew prince Jing was fond of orchids. As a matter of fact, as soon as they found out he was back in the capital, various officials eagerly sent some over to gain his favor.

His wrist was bandaged, after the imperial physician had examined the wound. He had said that the bite was deep, and even after it healed, a row of teeth marks would be left behind.

Zhe Geng bowed and started his report on the earlier events. When he reached the part where Wei Luo had stabbed Wuzhou, his tone revealed some admiration: "That little girl is really powerful, the man's face was covered in blood..." He paused. Recalling that his prince had suffered a similar treatment, he immediately shut his mouth.

Zhao Jie, however, was rather composed. He asked: "Did you take her back?"

Zhu Geng nodded, "Your subordinate made sure she went inside." Thinking about it, he really couldn't understand: "Your Highness, why did you let her go so easily?"

Zhao Jie stroked the table with a slender finger, smiling playfully, "Didn't you say she was crying?"

It was difficult to imagine that menacing little girl's crying expression. Zhao Jie found it a little regrettable to have missed seeing it.

Zhu Geng's face displayed some embarrassment, "Yes... A moment ago, she was still fine. Who'd have guessed she would start weeping after a bit of scolding."

Zhao Jie raised his lips. Zhu Geng was unaware of what had happened, but he could probably guess most of it. Maybe she had

put on an act of crying so pitifully, so Zhu Geng would be forced to release her. If that was really the case, then that little girl was simply too crafty.

Zhao Jie turned his gaze back to the golden-thread orchid, looking pensive.

He didn't let Zhu Geng release Wei Luo because of a tender heart, but because he was informed that she was the Duke residence's little Miss. Duke Ying Wei Zhangchun had left some impression on him. The old man handled work matters in a rigid manner, so that each time he was summoned in the palace, the emperor would always be breaking things in anger. Probably because he was extremely serious and didn't know how to be accommodating, he frequently left the emperor at a loss for words. However, regardless of how angry the emperor got, he was unable to remove that official, whose prestige was so prominent. Therefore, if Zhao Jie was able to forge a relationship with Duke Ying and win him over to his side, the bite on his wrist wouldn't have been in vain.

Zhao Jie, thinking about Zhu Geng's recount of Wei Luo's actions, lifted his lips full of interest: "Which Miss did you say she was?"

Zhu Geng said: "The fourth Miss, your subordinate heard the gatekeeper call her like that with my own ears."

Duke residence's fourth Miss, Wei Luo.

The only one he couldn't easily figure out was her.

A six year old girl took a hairpin to scratch a man's face without even batting an eye. Not just anyone could display this kind of courage and brutality.

He traced the no longer painful wound. That little girl had given him such a gift upon their first meeting, it really let him sit up and take notice.

Duke Ying's residence.

Wei Luo, who had gone out together with Madam Du, had returned with an unknown man. The gatekeeper had a scare, opening the door and rushing her inside. After he looked her over to make sure she wasn't harmed, he asked: "Miss, why did you come back by yourself? What about the fifth Madam (Du)? Why is it just you?"

Wei Luo, with an aggrieved appearance and reddened eyes, asked in a saccharine voice: "Where's Daddy?"

The gatekeeper could discern at a glance that something important had occurred, and called one of the maidservants, who were working within the courtyard, to escort her to the reception pavilion: "The fifth Master has just come back from the Imperial Academy, and is currently in the reception pavilion. Let this maidservant lead you there."

Wei Luo mumbled an 'okay' with a soft, tearful voice.

The maidservant led the way. Although she was curious, she didn't dare ask anything. As they approached the building, they could hear the sound of people speaking coming from the front, attracting their attention. Two small children stood on the veranda outside. One female, one male. The girl was delicate, around five years old, wearing a light yellow short jacket and a bright red pleated skirt. Her hair was arranged in two small braids, interlaced with red string. Little bells decorated the strings, jingling whenever she moved. The boy looked similar to Wei Luo, with red lips and white teeth, his face was handsome and exuded honesty. He was wearing sapphire blue silk garments. With pursed lips, he was walking far ahead of the girl. It appeared their relationship wasn't good.

The little girl yelled at him displeased: "Wei Changhong, didn't you hear me speak? Why are you ignoring me?"

As it turned out, those two children were from the fifth family

branch—the sixth young master Wei Changhong and the fifth miss Wei Zheng.

Changhong disregarded Wei Zheng's words, and took a few more steps, before he happened to notice Wei Luo in the courtyard. His cold eyes brightened and his expression turned gentle. He quickly arrived at Wei Luo's side, "You're back."

Wei Luo paused, looking at him.

This was the first time she had seen Changhong since her rebirth.

They had been separated early in her past life, with Wei Luo not seeing him for ten years. Once she had turned 15 and had returned to the capital to look for her relatives, she had caught a glimpse of him from afar. At that time, he had no longer been the Changhong she knew. Madam Du and Wei Zheng had schemed against the 15 year old boy, ruining his future and turning him into a human waste, who spent his life in a daze. As Wei Luo recalled that scene, she couldn't bear the grief, and wanted to embrace him tightly.

That was the brother she had grown up with since birth. They were closer than anyone.

He was still young right now—six years old, same as her. She wouldn't lose him this time, they were definitely going to live well. If Madam Du and Wei Zheng wished to separate them, she would destroy them.

Ah Luo restrained her mood, and asked with a friendly smile: "Is Daddy inside?"

Changhong didn't answer, and studied Ah Luo instead.

He saw that Wei Luo was upset and her eyes were red. Coupled with the traces of tears on her cheeks, it appeared as if she had recently cried. Changhong's joyful expression changed. He used his hands to wipe her face, and pursed his lips to ask unhappily: "Did you cry?"

Madam Du had kept Changhong away from Wei Luo, saying that



she was sick and might infect him, that he should wait until she got better, before he went to see her. He hadn't seen her for three or four days already.

During the time Changhong had spent waiting, he felt like the days were too long, seemingly endless. The two of them never had a mother, only a father, who was busy taking exams every day, and barely had time to accompany them. Thus, Ah Luo and him had grown especially close. In addition, the two were twins, their affections couldn't be compared to other siblings.

Changhong didn't like speaking much, so the elders at home found him somewhat eccentric. But he could still attract a young miss' love, annoying him. Who told him to be born with a good face, so naturally popular.

His behavior only changed around Wei Luo, completely different from the cold shoulder he gave Wei Zheng earlier. Now, for example, he was anxious because of Wei Luo's tears. His delicate brows frowned as he asked: "Who bullied you?"

Wei Luo lowered her head to rub her eyes, her intonation woeful: "Changhong..."

She hadn't seen him for so long, so she missed him a lot. But Changhong thought she was really bullied, his small face growing taut with anger.

Wei Kun heard the commotion from inside the reception pavilion, and went out. He had just returned from the Imperial Academy and hadn't even had time to change his clothes. Seeing the three children under the entrance, he couldn't help laughing: "What's going on? Why are you all standing here?"

Wei Luo looked up with wet eyes, teardrops still clinging to her lashes. Seeing Wei Kun, she recalled her original plan. Her lips trembled, she jumped into Wei Kun's arms keening and wailing, and complained sadly—"Daddy, madam doesn't want Ah Luo, madam wants to sell Ah Luo..."

# Chapter 6

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Supporting the small body, Wei Kun asked with surprise : “What is Ah Luo saying? Madam wants to sell you? Didn’t she take you to burn incense at Huguo Temple? Where is everyone?” Since he mentioned them, he looked around, and not seeing a trace of Madam Du, furrowed his brows, “How did you come back?”

The maidservant, who had delivered Wei Luo to the reception pavilion, muttered quietly: “Fourth Miss was brought here by a bodyguard... At that time, there was no one else with the fourth Miss.”

That was a serious issue—Madam Du had led her out, but the girl had come back alone. No matter what, Madam Du hadn’t properly looked after Wei Luo. Wei Kun’s complexion wasn’t very good. Ah Luo was crying as well, the tears soaking through his clothing material. His heart hurt for her. He squatted down and held Ah Luo’s small face, asking gently: “Ah Luo, tell Daddy clearly, what has actually happened? Who was that guard? What about Madam?”

Wei Changhong, who was standing nearby, was equally distressed. His older sister was crying, but he had no idea why. He stepped forward to comfort her, but didn’t know what to say.

He slowly reached for Wei Luo’s hand, his grip tightening the longer he held it, “Ah Luo...”

Wei Luo was crying very pitifully, out of breath, her beautiful little face was red. She was wiping her tears and at the same time piling up the accusations: “After we finished burning incense, we passed through a forest on the way back, and two people were waiting there... Elder sister Jin Lu heard them, Madam said she was going to sell me to them...”

She repeated everything that had happened that morning. Her words were child-like and simple, but each spearhead was pointed

at Madam Du. She was the one, who had contacted the slave traders, had prepared the sedative medicine, and had wanted to snatch her forcefully... The more she cried, the more dejected she looked. Finally, she asked Wei Kun in a terrified way: "Daddy, did Ah Luo make a mistake? That's why Madam doesn't want me. Daddy tell Ah Luo, Ah Luo can change..."

Wei Kun's complexion was black like the bottom of a pot. His thumbs gently wiped the tears from her face, his tone was doting: "Ah Luo hasn't made any mistakes. You're Daddy's little treasure."

He had barely spoken, and Wei Zheng, who had heard everything from beginning to end, shouted angrily from the entrance: "You're saying nonsense! My mother didn't do that, she's not a bad person. You're lying to Daddy!"

Although Wei Zheng was five, she could roughly understand what was going on. Wei Luo complained to father, saying that mother had done something wrong. She saw that father looked very angry, and would certainly punish mother later. She subconsciously knew she had to protect her own mother, couldn't let Wei Luo's scheme prevail.

Wei Zheng wasn't aware of the whole truth behind this matter. Madam Du alone had planned it all in secret. Today, Wei Zheng had wanted to go to Huguo Temple together with them, and even threw a fit that Madam Du was favoring Wei Luo, only taking her. Madam Du had had no choice but to tell her, as long as she behaved, she wouldn't ever see Wei Luo again. After considering for a while, Wei Zheng had nodded in agreement.

Wei Zheng and Wei Luo had never gotten close. Wei Zheng's temper was very similar to Madam Du—competitive, doing anything to fight for first place, wanted to be more outstanding than anyone. So whenever Duke Ying praised Wei Luo, she couldn't accept it in her heart.

Where was Wei Luo better than her? Why did everyone like her?

Mother had said that Wei Luo didn't have a mother, that she was an illegitimate child. She quietly bore these words in mind, therefore had always thought Ah Luo's status was lower than hers. Now that she saw Wei Kun being so good to Wei Luo, she got even more furious.

Wei Zheng stepped forward, prepared to pull Ah Luo away from Wei Kun's embrace, and yelled: "You're lying, you're a liar!"

However, before she managed to touch Wei Luo's clothes, she was shoved away by Changhong. She staggered back a few steps, couldn't come to a stop, and slumped on the ground.

Changhong stood protectively in front of Wei Luo, his small face very serious, eyes cold: "Don't touch her!"

Wei Zheng hadn't seen Changhong so furious. She was usually calling him "Wei Changhong, Wei Changhong", never called him sixth elder brother. She didn't regard him as an older brother, let alone respect him. Yet now, as she looked at Changhong's fierce face anxiously, she suddenly felt scared. Turning to Wei Kun, she saw he was still comforting a crying Wei Luo, and simply had no time to pay attention to her situation. Frustrated, she also started crying.

\*

Wei Kun coaxed Wei Luo with great difficulty, and asked the maidservant Jin Ge to bring her in the blue-screened room to lie down for a while.

Just as Jin Ge got close, she tightly held onto Wei Kun's neck, not letting go: "I don't want her!"

Jin Ge awkwardly froze in place.

She clearly remembered the past Jin Ge and Jin Ci's actions. As soon as she saw them, Wei Luo would think of the way Madam Du had strangled her neck. She hated everyone who had been at the scene, but most of all the indifferent Jin Ci and Jin Ge. At that

time, they had already been bought over by Madam Du. She would definitely not trust them now, and if opportunity came, she'd give them both a harsh lesson.

She also refused to be held by unfamiliar servants.

Wei Kun thought she didn't allow anyone to get near her, because she'd received a scare, so he indulged her: "Alright, since you don't want her, Daddy will take you."

An ironwood arhat bed was set up in the blue-screened room. Wei Kun put her on the bed gently and rubbed her head: "Ah Luo, stay here for a while. If you want to eat anything, tell Daddy, so I can ask people to prepare something."

Wei Luo was tossed about for most of the day. Aside from one bowl of small wonton in the early morning, she hadn't eaten anything. Today had tired her out more than usual, naturally, her belly was also hungry. Looking at Changhong, she still remembered the dishes they'd always liked to eat: "Daddy, I want to eat hibiscus cakes and pine nuts fish."

Wei Kun was brooding over the earlier matter, barely forcing out a smile, "Alright, I'll ask the kitchen to make them."

After his departure, he sent a maidservant to the kitchen to let them prepare these two dishes, in addition to eight treasure gourd chicken and shrimp sauce tofu, also stewed carp soup, and a few side dishes. He had just returned from the Imperial Academy. There had been no time for lunch yet, but he didn't have an appetite anymore. He settled the two children first, then sent people to the Pine court (Madam Du's court). The people, who had recently served Madam Du were called to the front of the pavilion, kneeling neatly in two rows.

These people served Madam Du daily, it was certain they had to know something to a degree, but they weren't saying anything. The thought that these people had ganged up to harm Ah Luo, had him quaking with fury.

A maidservant brought over a pot of freshly brewed green tea. He took the ink-colored small cup and smashed it in front of the servant, the hot tea spilling all over the ground. He said: "Flog each person 20 times, and don't spare the rod!"

The people cried out as one, claiming they were innocent and knew nothing.

They truly didn't know, as Madam Du hid everything from them and only kept her closest attendant informed. But Wei Kun was extremely angry. He didn't listen to excuses, and without even waiting for Madam Du to come back and explain herself, punished all the servants in Pine court.

In the blue-screened room, Wei Luo and Wei Changhong were sitting on the arhat bed, while a maidservant gracefully placed the food to the side and waited on the two children.

Wei Luo picked up a hibiscus cake. She was half-done eating it, when she noticed Changhong hadn't moved his chopsticks, but his gaze was firmly locked on her. Not in a hurry to eat, she put down the chopsticks, and holding her cheek, asked: "Changhong, why aren't you eating? Are you full just from watching me?"

Changhong wasn't hungry as he still hadn't gotten over his shock, after listening to Wei Luo's words from earlier. More mature than his peers, he could understand what had happened. He knew what 'slave trader' meant. Although he wasn't too intimate with Madam Du, usually he'd show respect for her and regard her as an elder. It never crossed his mind she would harm Wei Luo.

Pursing his lips, Changhong slowly and solemnly said: "Ah Luo, I'll protect you from now on."

Wei Luo's hand paused over her food, and raised her head to stare at him blankly. She'd never had the chance to hear such words in her previous life. Though they really affected her, Changhong was still only six years old. She'd lived ten years longer

than him, it made more sense for her to protect him.

There was no trace of the sadly sobbing in Wei Kun's bosom appearance on Ah Luo's face. She picked up a piece of gourd chicken and held it in front of him, asking with a smile: "You're younger than me, how can you protect me?"

Changhong anxiously raised his head to argue: "Only younger by an hour!"

Oh, he was actually younger than her in that way as well. Ah Luo didn't bicker with him over that, and shook the chicken between the chopsticks, "Are you eating or not? My hand is all sore from holding it up."

Of course, Changhong ate it. As he chewed, he suddenly remembered, "The maidservant said you were brought back by a bodyguard. Who is he?"

He unexpectedly thought of the point that even Wei Kun hadn't taken note of.

Wei Luo thought it really wasn't an easy matter to explain, so from the thousand words, she formed a single sentence: a good-hearted person passed through there by chance, and conveniently rescued her.

Saying that, Zhu Geng was too cheap. Instead of saving her, he wanted to deliver her to his master for retribution.

Changhong didn't think much of it and didn't ask further. They sat on the bed and finished eating their meal. When the maidservant went forward to tidy up the tableware, they heard someone announce from outside that Madam Du had come back.

Finally back.

Ah Luo jumped down from the arhat bed full of enthusiasm, in a few steps ran up behind the sliding door, and pasted her ear to the surface with a mysterious appearance.

Changhong followed after her bewildered, “What are you doing?”

Ah Luo turned around, raised up a white and tender finger to place it on her lips, and hushed him, “Madam is back...”

\*

After Madam Du returned to the residence, she wanted to go directly to Pine court, but the gate servants specifically told her the fifth master was waiting for her in the reception pavilion, and had her escorted there.

Madam Du was able to guess correctly the reason for this. It was certain that Wei Luo had come back and blabbed to Wei Kun one-sidedly. Wei Kun had always loved Wei Luo, so he must have believed her. As he was positively angry right now, he’d try to find trouble for her (Du).

She clenched the fists hidden in her sleeves, forcing herself to calm down, and signaled the maidservant Ning Xue with her eyes. Ning Xue caught on quickly, quietly slipping away to go to the rear court of Pear courtyard—the third family branch living quarters.

Together with Madam Du, Jin Lu and Nurse Ye also arrived at the reception pavilion. After Zhu Geng carried off Wei Luo, they had pursued part of the way, but couldn’t catch up with him. Madam Du had wanted to silence them immediately while they were all in the wilderness, getting rid of two witnesses, as well as removing Wei Luo’s close confidantes, killing two birds with one stone. However, one had to pay attention to the bigger picture. If Jin Lu and Nurse Ye died, it would only make her look more suspicious. By then, no matter how much she explained, it wouldn’t be enough.

Anyway, she couldn’t admit her own thoughts of bringing harm to Wei Luo. As long as she insisted Jin Lu and Nurse Ye were speaking nonsense, she would also have a little wiggle room to save the situation.



Though she was thinking so in her heart, when she passed by the main hall's wall, she saw the servants kneeling outside the reception pavilion. Madam Du suddenly felt her legs giving out, and shrank back.

It seemed like Wei Kun was for real this time.

Wei Kun's temper was mild and tolerant, he rarely punished the servants. Today, those servants had injuries as if they had been flogged. She couldn't help but tightly grip the nearby Nurse Dou's hand, taking a deep breath: "Nurse... I'm afraid I can't get out of this today..."

Nurse Dou was the wet nurse she had brought over from her maternal home. She'd taken care of her since childhood, so they were very close and affectionate. Narrow-minded, mean, and crafty, selling off Wei Luo was half her idea. Wuzhou and Wang, those two slave traders, were also her acquaintances.

Nurse Dou comforted her, "Madam, don't worry. You've shared marital affections with the master for 5-6 years..."

Saying that, they walking into the reception pavilion.

Wei Kun was sitting on the ironwood mandarin chair with a cold face. He saw her coming in, but didn't speak a word.

Madam Du steadied her mind, fixed a smile on her face, and was about to ask what had happened. Before she could ask, Wei Zheng, who was held by a nearby maidservant, cried out: "Mother!" She was waving her thin arms, wishing to jump into Madam Du's arms, "Mother run, Daddy is angry, he wants to punish you..."

Madam Du clutched at her heart, "Zheng!"

She wanted to go forward to hug Wei Zheng, but Wei Kun ordered in a cold voice: "Take the fifth Miss outside!"

The maidservant obeyed Wei Kun's instruction, Wei Zheng was forcefully taken away. Even as they disappeared from sight, Wei Zheng's weeping could still be heard from outside.

Hearing her cry so sadly, Madam Du felt her own heart breaking. No matter what Wei Kun intended to do, she had to say: “How can master treat Wei Zheng so heartlessly, she’s your daughter!”

Wei Kun looked at her, finally letting his anger out, “You dare say these words? Is Zheng my daughter, but Ah Luo not?” He paused, took a deep breath, and asked enraged, “Where did you take Ah Luo today? You met anyone?”

## Chapter 7

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They'd been married for six years, but Wei Kun had never questioned her in that tone.

Among the different masters of Duke Ying's residence, Wei Kun's disposition was the gentlest. Not quick-tempered like the eldest master (Wei Kun's oldest brother, first family branch), and not as impulsive as the second master, he was mild-mannered and refined. Because she liked that about him, Madam Du disregarded the fact that his mind was set on Jiang Miaolan, in order to get married into Duke Ying's household.

After getting married, Du Yueying did her best to please him in every possible way. Including in the bedroom, she had racked her brains to think of how to make him happy. She had believed she could gradually replace Jiang Miaolan in his heart. After all, that woman was gone, while she had the rest of their lifetime with him. But she slowly discovered that she couldn't enter Wei Kun's heart. He was good to her out of civility, rather than affection. They treated each other with mutual respect during the day, and the night activities resembled fulfilling a duty—once he was done, he wouldn't even say a few intimate words, but would just turn over and fall asleep.

That much, Du Yueying could still endure, until the day she found an old sachet under Wei Kun's pillow.

The sachet was embroidered with mandarin ducks playing in the water, a very common pattern, with an unskilled needlework, obviously the work of someone, who had just started learning embroidery. Du Yueying thought he was using a bad sachet, and didn't give it much consideration. In any case, it was old, and the Duke's residence had plenty of better ones, so she let the servants throw it away.

But later that day, after Wei Kun came back to find the sachet

gone, instead of getting angry, his complexion turned ashen. His appearance was worse, than if he'd actually gotten angry. He asked where the servant had thrown away the sachet, and when the maidservant answered somewhere in the rear court, he didn't bother with her further, and rushed to the rear court to search.

So desperate and crazy, as if that sachet was his lifeblood. Without that sachet, he wouldn't be able to live.

Afterwards, Du Yueying came to know it was Jiang Miaolan, who'd given him that thing. At that time, Jiang Miaolan had been pregnant and could only embroider a little bit each day. Just as she's finished the sachet, the children had been born. That was the last and only thing she'd given Wei Kun before she left, no wonder it was his treasure.

That was the first time Madam Du clearly realized Jiang Miaolan's importance in Wei Kun's heart.

That issue was like a thorn lodged deep into her heart. She gradually found traces of Jiang Miaolan everywhere in her life. For example, he'd frequently look lost in thought as he stared at that sachet; or he'd laugh joyfully when he saw Wei Luo and Wei Changhong; or he'd be better to Wei Luo than to Wei Zheng... As time passed, she hated Jiang Miaolan more and more, and couldn't wait to remove her pair of daughter and son. Out of sight, out of mind!

So she secretly prepared all these plans.

Only when all traces of Jiang Miaolan were gone from his life, would he notice her and Zheng.

She thought the preparations were flawless, certain that there wasn't the smallest miscalculation. Who'd have expected that little girl Wei Luo would suddenly change midway, like a different person, and upset all her plans. She gritted her teeth. Not wishing to reveal her guilty conscience on her own, she smiled unhurriedly, and asked perplexed: "Why are you asking such a

question? I brought Ah Luo to Huguo Temple to burn incense today, as everyone here knows. Did you forget?”

It was precisely because he didn't forget, that he was asking her. Wei Kun gripped the armrests, trying to control his emotions, “Is that why Ah Luo came back first? She went out together with you, but you didn't look after her well. If she had come across some danger, how would you explain this to me?”

Madam Du was getting reprimanded in front of all these servants, she felt thoroughly disgraced. She defended herself subconsciously: “A bodyguard with excellent martial arts took her. Who knows what his reason was...”

Not waiting for her to finish speaking, Jin Gu lost her patience by the entrance, shoving two maidservants aside and rushing in. She dropped on her knees in front of Wei Kun, “Master, this servant girl (referring to herself) has heard everything. Begging master to do right by the fourth Miss!” Her eyes red, she looked angrily at Madam Du, and stated: “The madam didn't return directly to the residence from Huguo Temple, but brought fourth Miss into the woods, where two slave traders were waiting... This servant girl heard with my own ears, the madam told them to sell Miss as far as possible. If Master doesn't believe me, you can send people to search in the woods. Those two should still be nearby!”

Wei Kun clasped his hands and looked straight at Madam Du: “Is she telling the truth?”

Madam Du was leaning on Nurse Dou, holding her breath and gritting her teeth: “Utter nonsense! There's no way I know such people. You said you heard us talk, where's your evidence? If you can't produce the evidence, you should be ready for the consequences!”

While in the woods, she'd said the slave traders were a hunting couple. Returning to the official's residence, it turned out she didn't know them. Jin Lu really hated her brazenness. For a while,

she couldn't take into account the different status between masters and servants, as she wished to expose her mask immediately: "The Nurse and me are both witnesses, the fourth Miss was also present. If Madam wants to quibble, better call the fourth Miss here to personally ask. Little children never lie!"

Long before they came back, Wei Luo had told Wei Kun everything.

Wei Kun felt truly sad for his daughter, and refused to involve Wei Luo even a tiny bit. He only said: "Ah Luo came back crying and told me that the madam didn't want her, that she wanted to sell her. She also asked what she did wrong." Saying this, his eyes reddened and he glared at Madam Du, "I also want to ask what she did wrong that you can't tolerate her, when she's only six years old."

His eyes were full of anger, so unfamiliar. A firm look that made Du Yueying's legs go soft.

She opened her mouth, but couldn't say a word.

Yes, she simply could not tolerate them, really wishing to see the two siblings immediately disappear. That way, her world would be tranquil. She also had Zheng with Wei Kun, the three of them made a whole family. Where did those two children fit in?

Why were they blocking her happiness?

Nurse Dou heard Wei Kun's words and seemed to find a lifeline. She quickly followed up: "Master, you just said Miss had returned ahead of time. If Madam really wanted to sell her, how could she get away so easily? It must be that bodyguard who influenced her. The fourth Miss is young and naïve, she learned to say this from him..."

Wei Kun threw her a cold glance, "Are you making fourth Miss out to be a fool, or me?"

This simple question left Nurse Dou dumbfounded.

Wei Kun added: "What relation does that bodyguard have to you that he would frame you? If Ah Luo wasn't rescued by him, she also wouldn't have come back!"

Speechless, Nurse Dou suddenly knelt on the ground and cried: "Master, if you don't believe us, send people to Huguo Temple to look around whether there really are slave traders as that maidservant said... If they're not found, I'm begging Master to restore my madam's innocence."

The reason she could say that, was because they had arranged everything before coming back.

Madam Du had given the married couple a lot of money, rushing them to leave the capital and go away to Liulin county, never to return. Wuzhou hadn't gotten what he'd come for and his face was ruined by Ah Luo, so he didn't want to let them go easily. But looking at the sum Madam Du had offered, that would be enough to feed them for three to five years without working, he had agreed without a fuss. That's why Nurse Dou was so bold. After so long, that couple was certainly far away. Even if Wei Kun searched, he wouldn't find them.

"Good, good." Wei Kun nodded angrily, and called eight guards over. Pointing at Jin Lu, he said: "Go with her to Huguo Temple, and find the people she talked about. If you don't find them today, don't come back!"

Duke Ying's guards were well-trained and worked very efficiently. Hearing his orders, they complied immediately, and followed Jin Lu to go out.

\*

Just as the guards left, two women waked in from outside.

Leading the way was the third madam, Madam Liu. Her hair combed in a cloud bun, jade hairpins with golden cicadas at her temples and pearls coiled around, it was really luxurious.

Combined with her bright, showy tunic, the ensemble was actually consistent with her temper. Passing through the gate, she exclaimed with surprise, "What is going on? Such a huge commotion, did fifth sister-in-law do something wrong that let fifth brother-in-law get so angry?"

Walking behind her was the fourth madam, Madam Qin. She was comparatively low-key. She had two golden butterfly hairpins tucked in her bun, and was wearing a honey-colored dress with peony patterns, she looked beautiful and gentle.

A while ago, Madam Du had signaled for Ning Xue to bring the third madam over as her ally. When Ning Xue went to the Pear courtyard, she had found the fourth madam in the third madam's room, so she had invited them together.

Duke Ying had five sons and three daughters. The daughters were all married, and only visited on holidays. From the remaining five masters, the eldest, third and fifth were from the main wife, the second and fourth—from a concubine. Duke Ying's position was quite high, so even if the second and fourth sons were born of a concubine, the young ladies they married weren't bad. The fourth madam's family was from Marquis An Ling's house. She was a daughter of the main wife. The young lady from Marquis An Ling's house was known in the capital as delicate, graceful, and virtuous, with splendid manners. That marriage could be considered the fourth master's moving up in society.

After getting married, the fourth master and madam were close and affectionate, their days passed in satisfaction. Madam Qin already had three sons. She'd always wanted a daughter, but never got one. Since the fourth master, Wei Yan, and Wei Kun had their duty in the Imperial Academy together, the two's families visited each other diligently. So Madam Qin frequently saw Wei Luo and loved that little girl, who was beautiful and smart, like a little fairy. Moreover, Wei Luo didn't have a mother, so Madam Qin was compassionate and grew increasingly fond of her over time.



From the several madams in the residence, only the fourth madam treated Ah Luo wholeheartedly well.

When she saw Madam Qin enter, Wei Luo, who had been hiding behind the blue screen, hurriedly pushed the screens open and ran up to her, dragging her soft voice in a spoiled manner: “Fourth aunt, hug.”

Madam Qin smiled and picked her up, flicking her little nose, “How come Ah Luo’s here? Are you feeling better now? I had to visit my parents yesterday. You won’t blame your aunt for not coming to see you, right?”

Ah Luo burrowed in her neck. Leaning her head, she saw Madam Du glowering at her. She lowered her head, so that no one saw the corners of her mouth bending in a smirk, then her two slender arms tightly hugged Madam Qin: “Ah Luo is alright... Fourth aunt, Ah Luo is afraid.”

Madam Qin was puzzled, “What are you afraid of?”

Ah Luo’s voice was faint, with a hint of fear, it sounded exceedingly distressed, “Afraid of madam...”

Madam?

While Madam Qin was speculating, Madam Du angrily cut in: “Ah Luo!”

The girl in her bosom cowered, body slightly shivering, and Madam Qin realized that her ‘madam’ referred to the fifth madam.

Didn’t Ah Luo call her mother before? Why did it change?

Madam Qin looked at Wei Kun. Although he didn’t want to speak of it again, he repeated everything from earlier today.

Madam Qin and Madam Liu only now learned that such a big incident had taken place. Madam Qin was quite shocked, even her impression of Madam Du had changed. As for Madam Liu, she assumed a natural demeanor and actually laughed: “How can fifth

brother-in-law trust the maidservant so easily? What if she intentionally framed fifth sister-in-law out of malice?”

However, what would the maidservant Jin Lu gain out of framing Madam Du?

Wei Kun didn't feel like speaking, and only requested for Madam Qin to bring Wei Luo back inside the blue-screened room, as he didn't want Wei Luo to tarnish her mind listening to this nasty affair.

Two hours later, the guards returned together with Wuzhou and Wang.

Hearing that Wuzhou and Wang were brought back, Nurse Dou's body went soft and dropped to the ground, unable to get up.

Didn't she send them away? How did the guards find them?

Wei Kun saw her reaction and could mostly guess the reason. His heart froze over. He asked the guards: “Where are they?”

One of the guards bowed and performed a greeting, then said: “To answer the Master, those two are still outside the courtyard, they don't dare come in. We seized two things from them. Please take a look, Master.”

Wei Kun nodded, letting him hand the objects over.

Nurse Dou and Madam Du had an idea what those were. They looked at each other, feeling coldness seeping in.

# Chapter 8

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Sure enough, what the guard handed over was one package of the sleeping medicine and not a small amount of money.

Nurse Dou and Madam Du's faces were white.

They couldn't figure out how these people had managed to find Wuzhou and Wang. Weren't they supposed to leave Sheng, why were they found?

Wei Kun crushed the bank notes and the medicine in his hands, that were trembling with anger. He waved the items then threw them at Nurse Dou and Madam Du, "What is this? Do you have anything else to say!"

A madam, who rarely went outside the residence, unexpectedly kept this kind of thing on her. Obviously, her conscience wasn't clear.

Wei Kun was both furious and disappointed. What was more, he felt sorry to Wei Luo. These years, he had thought Madam Du was taking care of Ah Luo very well, going along with any of her wishes, showing how much she loved her all the time. But he hadn't considered that she would be hiding such evil intentions. If Ah Luo hadn't been rescued today, she would've been sold to the slave traders. That small child, who had only turned six earlier this year, was well-behaved and sensible. Just what kind of ruthless heart would hate her?

Wei Kun grew more and more uncomfortable, his heart heavy. He couldn't stop himself thinking of Jiang Miaolan. If she was still here, if she hadn't gone, Ah Luo wouldn't be in the current situation... He would properly love the mother and daughter pair, making sure nothing would harm them... He was so in love with her, why had she left?

With so many years since then, he'd believed his love for Jiang

Miaolan had faded, only resentment remaining. But the truth was, he still loved her. Loved her brighter than the sun smile, her gentle and passionate eyes, and her whimsical nature. She had taken root in his heart, and nothing could uproot her for as long as he lived.

She had appeared in his life without a warning, but it had never crossed his mind that she would leave the same way, without a trace.

Since then, whenever he saw Ah Luo and Changhong, he would think of her.

Wei Kun was in pain, his back hunched over as if he had suddenly aged several years. Standing up, he said to the fourth madam: "As soon as father and mother come back, fourth sister-in-law, please help me tell them, Madam Du is not virtuous, and her heart is malicious..." Closing his eyes, he said resolutely: "I want to divorce her."

His words were like thunder, exploding in the gathered people's ears, startling even the meddlesome third madam Liu.

Shocked, Madam Du staggered back a few steps. If it wasn't for Nurse Dou holding her in place, she would've collapsed on the ground.

Divorcing wasn't a minor incident. Coupled with Wei Kun's accusations, it was enough to give her a reputation of a vicious wife. If she wanted to remarry afterwards, it wouldn't be easy. Not to mention her own daughter's reputation would be implicated, also affecting her future marriage.

Moreover, Madam Du was the maternal niece of Count Zhongyi's madam, she was backed up by the Count of Zhongyi's house. Duke Ying and Count Zhongyi were good friends for many years. Even if Wei Kun wanted to divorce her, it wouldn't go so easily.

Nurse Dou crawled on her hands and feet, hanging onto Wei Kun's foot, and wept noisily as she begged for mercy: "Master,

please investigate this issue thoroughly, Madam is innocent... Madam wasn't aware of anything, it was all planned by this old servant, the madam isn't related to it... Begging Master to think it over..."

Madam Du looked at her dumbfounded. She hadn't expected that at the critical moment, Nurse Dou would take the fall to save her.

Speaking of it, Nurse Dou was truly loyal to Madam Du. The two of them, master and servant, had a close relationship. Nurse Dou was Madam Du's wet nurse, as Madam Du's parents had perished early. Since childhood, she had been placed in Count Zhongyi's residence with only Nurse Dou as a devoted servant. Nurse Dou had raised her, hence their feelings could be compared to those of any mother and daughter.

Wei Kun flapped his robe, kicking her out of the way: "She wasn't aware? The two of you always stick together, how can she not be aware!"

The kick wasn't light, it had hurt Nurse Dou's chest, but she still insisted: "Madam truly didn't know, it was me who deceived her at Huguo Temple, the hidden sleeping medicine is also mine. There is a rich family in Liulin county, who want a beautiful girl to become their daughter. The Wuzhou couple then contacted this old servant... This old servant lost her mind for a moment, thought the fourth miss fit their condition, and made those plans. Master, if you must punish someone, it's me. This matter has nothing to do with the madam!"

Wei Kun was enraged, did this old thing really believe he wouldn't punish her? He leaned over and grabbed her neck, the fingers squeezing, and asked through gritted teeth: "Your courage is really great. The fourth miss of Duke Ying's family is not something you can sell just because you decided so. Did you think I would spare you because you have Madam Du backing you?"

A man's strength was obviously larger than a woman's, even if he

was a scholar.

Nurse Dou's face turned red, her eyes rolled back: "Madam..."

That woke Madam Du up. Like a drowning man finding a lifeline, she hurried to Nurse Dou's side and said with astonishment: "Nurse, how can you be so muddled! Why did you want to do such a thing? Ah Luo is my daughter. I don't even have enough time to spend with her, how can I be willing to sell her!"

Madam Du's response was quick, also fixing her expression appropriately. She was thinking that as long as she could avoid this disaster, it was not a bad idea to trouble Nurse Dou to take on the blame. She would certainly compensate her later. She couldn't get divorced, she wasn't willing to, and she believed Wei Kun had at least some feelings for her.

Seeing that Nurse Dou couldn't breathe, Madam Du knelt to Wei Kun, pleading: "Nurse Dou was muddled for a while. Begging Master to forgive her this once..."

Did she think Nurse Dou's words were enough to wash her hands off this matter? Wei Kun had said, today he didn't plan to let them off. First, he would punish those servants who thought themselves untouchable, then he would wait for Duke Ying to come back and discuss the divorce. He loosened the fingers around Nurse Dou's neck, and said to the gate guard: "Bring Nurse Dou out to the courtyard, use the wooden rod to beat her to death!"

Nurse Dou went soft from fear, and couldn't rise from the ground. With two bodyguards on both sides, she was dragged out.

Wei Kun was still not done, he said: "Find the servants who went to Huguo Temple with Madam Du today, give them 30 hits each, lock them in the woodshed after. Sell them off tomorrow!"

Among those were Madam Du's trusted maidservants, one was Ning Xue, the other—Han Shuang.

Madam Du suddenly lost her closest people. She wanted to beg

for mercy for them, but she was in trouble herself. Her mouth opened, but couldn't utter a single word. In the end, she helplessly watched as they were led to the courtyard, tied up, and hit with the wooden rod. Her despair was indescribable.

Seeing this, the fourth madam Qin initially intended to placate him, but Wei Kun didn't seem open to any words. She had to swallow the words that were on the tip of her tongue.

These people were truly wretched, even 100 hits wouldn't be sufficient to let out his anger.

Wei Luo was the dignified Duke of Ying's family legitimate Miss. Having such evil intentions toward her, they were really tired of living.

Third madam Liu, listening to the crying coming from outside, knitted her brows: "These servants are so wicked, but fifth brother-in-law, you also heard, fifth sister-in-law is innocent... Isn't a divorce too much?"

Madam Liu was usually close with Madam Du, at this time she naturally spoke up for her.

Wei Kun was indifferent to the sounds coming from outside, his resolve firm, he said: "Even if she was unaware of this matter, she didn't show proper care for Ah Luo, that's for certain. If she can't manage the servants of her own courtyard well, I can blame her incompetence. If I don't divorce her, should I keep her so she can go on harming Ah Luo?"

Madam Liu added: "This is no small matter. It's better to discuss it with Father and Mother before coming to a conclusion..."

Cries kept coming from the courtyard. Nurse Dou was old, she couldn't endure the rod punishment. Several hits already brought her to death's doorstep. Madam Du glanced at the entrance. She wanted to tell the servants to hit lightly, but Wei Kun's orders were 'beat to death'. Would the servants dare disobey? So whether

she pleaded for Nurse Dou or not, the rod would keep hitting steadily, and soon she would be bruised all over.

Madam Du was holding onto the door with water chestnut flowers design. The March day was cold, while the sun was blindingly bright from above. Her head dizzy and her body weak, she fainted on the ground.

\*

In the blue-screened room, Ah Luo was lying next to the window, looking out to the row of kneeling servants. She was listening to the rod hitting the bodies, finding the sounds delightful and refreshing to hear.

Nurse Dou thought hiding behind Madam Du would save her? Naïve.

Madam Du couldn't save herself, where would she find the ability to help her? She was already useless. No matter whether Nurse Dou lived or died, or how ugly her death would be, these were now beyond Madam Du's control.

Wei Luo was grinning. Under the bangs, a pair of clever eyes were spinning around. One didn't need to guess, to know that evil thoughts were definitely lurking there.

Wei Changhong was standing behind her, silent for a long time. At last, he couldn't help but ask: "Ah Luo, why did madam want to sell you? Is it because she's not our mother?"

Ah Luo turned around, meeting his puzzled eyes. She jumped down from the short couch to stand before him, "You know she isn't our mother?"

Changhong nodded, he knew, he had always known. Apparently, there had been a maidservant, who had let it slip in front of him, saying that biological and non-biological was different. He had heard it, and since then, had always kept it in mind. He had more on his mind than his peers. He hadn't told about it to Ah Luo



before, however, he was only a six year old child. After much deliberation, he still couldn't figure it out, so he asked in the end.

Ah Luo held his hand and let him look out the window at the servants getting hit. She answered happily: "That's right, because she is not our mother. She is Wei Zheng's mother. So in the future you can't consider her as 'mother' anymore, you must stay away from her, she's a bad person."

Changhong obediently agreed. His understanding of good and evil was still a little fuzzy, but whoever bullied Ah Luo was surely a bad person. After a while, he asked: "Then who is our mother? Where is she?"

Ah Luo hadn't seen her, either. She didn't know what Jiang Miaolan looked like. She thought for a moment, then said:

"She's dead."

\*

In the afternoon, Duke Ying Wei Zhangchun and his wife came back from their trip to their ancestors' home. Immediately after entering the residence, they learned of the situation, and called everyone to the reception pavilion to discuss how to settle the problem.

Wei Kun was wholeheartedly decided on divorce, regardless of some of the other masters' (his brothers) efforts to dissuade him. Madam Du had fainted at noon and had yet to wake up. The third madam had called for a doctor a moment ago, and they had no results for now.

Wei Zhangchun was over 50, a man of integrity. Having heard the whole story, he pounded his fist on the table angrily: "How can Madam Du be so irrational!"

Beside him was his wife, Madam Luo, wearing patterned plum-colored dress and golden jewelry encrusted with a green jade going around her forehead. She said with a frown: "Didn't you say Nurse

Dou personally admitted to planning everything, so it's unrelated to Madam Du? Where is she?"

The quiet fourth madam Qin said: "Fifth brother-in-law had her punished with a dozen hits by the rod. She couldn't endure it, barely alive, she was locked in the woodshed along with the other servants."

Actually, in accordance with Wei Kun's wishes, Nurse Dou should've been killed, but at that time Madam Du had fainted, causing the scene to fall into chaos. The third Madam made the servants stop for now, then let them bring the people into the woodshed, so when Duke Ying and his wife returned, the matter would be handled again by them.

The old Madam ordered someone to bring in Nurse Dou, who stumbled onto the ground like a pile of mud. She was covered in wounds from top to bottom, beaten to the point that she was barely breathing.

The old Madam asked her: "How did you plan everything? Tell us again in detail."

Nurse Dou was very loyal to Madam Du, given this chance, she didn't forget to protect her. She repeated today's excuse, taking in all the blame, she wept and yelled: "Madam was wrongly accused... Madam didn't know anything. If she made a mistake, it's the mistake of trusting this old servant too much. Begging the Duke and old Madam to exonerate Madam..."

The old madam waved, letting someone bring the person back to the woodshed.

The room with a dozen people inside, suddenly turned quieter.

The eldest master, Wei Min, thought things through, then said: "Fifth younger brother, it's better to think again, just in case what fifth sister-in-law's Nurse said was true. While we don't know all the facts, if you break the marriage, our family's relations with

Count Zhongyi's family will get damaged in the future. After all, father has decades of friendship with Count Zhongyi..."

That was exactly what all the people present had to consider, Count Zhongyi's status wasn't to be taken lightly. Most importantly, Count Zhongyi was from the same clan as the current Noble Consort Ning (Ning Guifei). She was being favored now, Emperor Chong Zhen's heart was set on her. Duke Ying's house was powerful, they weren't willing to offend Noble Consort Ning...

Wei Kun stood suddenly, saying with red-rimmed eyes: "Eldest brother needs not persuade me again. In the first place, when Ah Luo and Changhong were just born, you said that no one was looking after the children, and advised me to marry Madam Du, so Ah Luo and Changhong would also have a mother. But now, what is this mother doing? Whether she's related to today's matter or not, I've decided to end this!"

Wei Min opened his mouth, feeling guilty toward his brother after all, had nothing good to retort.

On his right side was sitting the third master, Wei Chang, who smiled coldly and secretly tightened his fist. Wei Min looked at him startled, afraid that he would punch someone the way his eyes threatened of violence.

It was good that Wei Chang knew propriety and reigned in his impulses.

These two brothers really gave him a headache. That was the case 6-7 years ago, and it was the case now. When all was said and done, the root of the problem was a woman.

The year Wei Kun brought Jiang Miaolan to the family, no one in the Duke's residence had expected that the two brothers would end up liking the same woman.

At that time, the two of them had fought for Jiang Miaolan quite a lot. After Wei Kun and Jiang Miaolan had gotten married, the

two brothers' relations not only didn't get better, but dropped below the freezing point. These many years, it still hadn't gotten better.

In third master Wei Chang's eyes, Wei Kun didn't know how to cherish people. At present, he viewed him as a hoodlum.

And in fifth master Wei Kun's eyes, Wei Chang was a lunatic, who coveted his younger brother's wife.

Eldest master Wei Min was in the process of getting a headache, when the third madam led the doctor inside. Madam Liu's complexion was very subtle, greeting Duke Ying and his wife, she hesitantly said: "Father, Mother, just now, the doctor diagnosed fifth sister-in-law... Fifth sister-in-law is one month pregnant."

## Chapter 9

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The people in the reception pavilion were all startled. No one had expected that at this important juncture, Madam Du would actually turn out pregnant.

She had fainted at the entrance, making people believe it was caused by her anxious mind, but nobody had supposed it was pregnancy. Presently, the doctor diagnosed her, and she was indeed pregnant, just a month and a half in.

The old madam was the first to react, asking the doctor: "How is it, is the fetus healthy?"

The doctor nodded, "Only a little nausea. I just gave the fifth madam a prescription. Let her take it for several days, everything will go smoothly."

The old madam nodded, looked at her youngest son Wei Kun, and suddenly didn't know what to say to him.

Not only was Madam Du pregnant, the fetus was also doing well. While everyone was deliberating whether to keep her in the family or not, she was unexpectedly with child. If they sent her back to Count Zhongyi's residence at this point, the Count's family would bear a grudge against them, and Duke Ying's reputation would also suffer a huge blow.

This divorce, regrettably, couldn't be carried out immediately. They had to take it as slow as possible.

The old madam was ready to convince Wei Kun to take the whole situation into account, but he suddenly stood up from the armchair and shot out of the reception pavilion like a gust of wind, heading for the rear court.

Thinking he was going to look for trouble with Madam Du, the old madam hurriedly urged the eldest and the third sons to block him. However, the third master remained unmoved and didn't

have any intention to block him, saying with contempt: “He’s unable to manage his own woman, yet also needs me and eldest brother to take charge for him?”

The eldest master reprimanded him loudly: “Third brother!”

Even at such a time, those two brothers couldn’t make peace for one moment? The animosity between them wasn’t formed overnight, could it be they intended to carry this old issue to their coffins?

The old madam choked with anger at her third son, pointing at Wei Chang a few times, “Your fifth brother aggravates me, now you also want to aggravate me...”

Wei Chang felt sorry to his mother, since he was annoyed at Wei Kun, not at the old madam. Thinking it through, he ended up saying a few caring words as an apology, then went out of the reception pavilion.

Outside the pavilion stood a thin and small girl, dressed in a delicate green dress that made her appear all the more adorable. She raised her little face, her bright and intelligent eyes revealing curiosity: “Third uncle, I’ve just heard, is madam really pregnant? Is she going to give birth to a younger brother?”

The little girl was Wei Luo. She couldn’t enter the reception pavilion, yet wanted to know what was happening, so she was hiding outside the door eavesdropping. When she learned that Madam Du was pregnant, other than getting angry, she came to a realisation.

No wonder Madam Du hadn’t gotten punished. Despite losing her, she had managed to hold onto the position of the fifth madam. The biggest reason was right there, after Madam Du had come back from Huguo Temple, her pregnancy had been discovered. Even if Wei Kun was enraged, even if he was suspicious about Wei Luo’s disappearance, for the sake of the child, he wouldn’t be able to take an action against her for the time being. Additionally, Wei Luo

hadn't come back and couldn't reveal the scheme. Wei Kun might have suspected Madam Du, but without any evidence, nothing could be confirmed. After a while, Madam Du had given birth to a child for Wei Kun, and the event had passed unexposed.

They had gradually forgotten about her, forgotten that the Duke's house had once had a fourth miss.

Only remembered Madam Du's children, Wei Zheng and Wei Changmi.

Changhong and her were the two obstacles of Madam Du's life. Once she kicked them out of the way, the road ahead was clear.

If she couldn't kick them out of the way, she would stumble terribly.

She recalled Madam Du had given birth to a son. Calculating the day of conception, it appeared to be the right time. Madam Du had wanted to grasp Wei Kun's heart using this son, but what a pity, her son had failed to live up to her expectations. Without learning or skills, with no ambitions, spending his days indulging in a life of debauchery, he had been the typical hedonistic young master. Previously, Wei Luo had witnessed him beat a person to death on the street. The other person had turned out to be the close servant of Prince Rui's successor. After the incident had been reported to the authorities, he had later been put in prison, where he hadn't fared well.

Madam Du had worried greatly for this son. She had spoiled him rotten since childhood. Even if she wanted to bring him back onto the correct path, she wouldn't know where to start.

Wei Luo considered spitefully, if she had a younger brother like that, dying a hundred times over would be better.

The third master Wei Chang looked at her for a long time without speaking.

Ah Luo called out again: "Third uncle?"

Wei Chang snapped out of his daze suddenly, and stretched out a palm to rub her head. The hostile expression from when he'd faced Wei Kun earlier, was completely replaced by a very kind one, "Little Ah Luo, how do you know it'll be a younger brother?"

Ah Luo resembled her mother more and more, especially those bright eyes. He couldn't help remembering Jiang Miaolan as he looked at her.

Wei Luo's tone was soft and immature: "I don't want a younger sister, Wei Zheng is not cute at all."

Wei Chang smiled, his face somewhat bitter and harsh, "Is that so?" He had nothing else to say and walked away from the pavilion. As he went, he whispered almost inaudibly: "If she was here, there would be no Wei Zheng..."

Though it was really soft, Wei Luo still heard that sentence.

She was very curious about her birth mother. What kind of woman was she, that she abandoned her children right after they were born? Did she love her and Changhong? Was it equal to the love Madam Du had for Wei Zheng?

Wei Luo didn't know.

The reception pavilion gradually emptied out, she was still standing at the entrance motionless. The longer she thought about it, the angrier she got.

Other mothers knew to protect their children, but where was her and Changhong's mother? Did she really die? Or did she just leave like fourth aunt said?

Rather than Jiang Miaolan having left, Ah Luo was hoping she had died instead.

Because that way, she could deceive herself that their mother loved them, leaving them alone against her will. If she hadn't died, but had actually abandoned them, then this whole life Wei Luo was never going to forgive her. Ah Luo was staring straight at a big vase



with winding lotus pattern in front of her. As if she was looking at Jiang Miaolan, she suddenly reached out and shoved it ruthlessly.

When she came back to her senses, the sound of the breaking vase echoed in her ears, crashing loudly, pieces of broken porcelain everywhere.

Ah Luo was standing next to the broken vase, her head hanging, no one could see through her thoughts.

Changhong found her because of the noise and stopped behind her. Softly, he asked with some surprise: "Ah Luo, what are you doing?"

Her shoulders shrank back, she didn't want to let Changhong see her gloomy side. Quickly adjusting her mood, she raised her hands to pat her cheeks, and turned around to rush to his side. She held his hand to run together, and with a big smile on her face, she didn't look the slightest bit guilty: "I knocked the vase down accidentally. Let's run, when grandmother finds out she will certainly get angry!"

Changhong was pulled along to run, a helpless expression on his face.

Ah Luo kept running ahead of him while thinking, she didn't have a mother, but she had Changhong, and also had herself. Madam Du believed she could escape unharmed? It wasn't over yet, they weren't done. She had plenty of methods to pay her back.

Like the vase, she wanted to see her fall, break apart, and meet a gruesome death.

\*

Pine courtyard.

Wei Kun arrived at the entrance of the Pine courtyard with long, hurried strides. He stood there, observing for a long time, before he stepped heavily into the courtyard.

Before today, he had never thought that so many things could happen within a day.

The servants in the courtyard had just been punished by him, and now worked despite their injuries. They kept silent, afraid that they would agitate him and eat the wooden rod again.

Wei Kun walked into the main house directly. Seeing his mood, the two maidservants outside the room didn't dare breathe deeply, let alone announce him. He walked past the screens with pine drawings, and entered the bedroom expressionlessly.

In the room, Madam Du was leaning on the yellow rosewood frame in bed, having just drank a bowl of medicine. Her face wore a relaxed expression compared to before, even smiling a little, thinking that this baby arrived in the nick of time to save her life. Two young maidservants waited on her by the bed, since Ning Xue and Han Shuang were now locked in the woodshed after getting beaten. Madam Du wasn't worried. Seeing Wei Kun enter, she even smiled as she asked him: "Sheng Ming, did you hear what the doctor said? We're having a child, a son or a daughter..."

Sheng Ming was Wei Kun's courtesy name.

Wei Kun kept standing behind the screen. The eyes looking at her held no emotion, and he didn't speak a word.

Madam Du met his gaze, feeling vaguely uneasy, but still maintaining her smile: "Do you want a son or a daughter? If it's up to me, since we already have Zheng, a son would be better..."

Before she finished, Wei Kun calmly interrupted her words: "Behind Pine courtyard is Ginkgo courtyard. Let your servants tidy the place up, and move there tonight."

Ginkgo courtyard was named after the several scattered ginkgo trees growing outside. That courtyard had been neglected to wither for a long time, empty, the servants didn't clean there either. In so many years, the land outside the courtyard had

overgrown with weeds. Even for half a minute, people absolutely wouldn't consider living there. Wei Kun forcing her to move at this time, made her lose hope entirely.

The smile on Madam Du's face froze, she asked in disbelief: "What did you say?"

Wei Kun was unwilling to even glance at her, shifting his line of sight to look out of the window, "If you don't want to live there, I'll write a letter of divorce, and let you return to Count Zhongyi's residence."

Madam Du was unable to tolerate this, she called his name with red-rimmed eyes: "Wei Sheng Ming, the child I'm carrying is yours, too!"

So what? He didn't love her, so he also found her children unnecessary.

Before, he didn't know her true nature, he had some feelings of guilt towards her. Because he could be a husband to her in all regards, except for loving her. Now he clearly realized her character, but he was relieved instead, a sort of pleasure from liberation. He couldn't stand being around her, and also didn't want to see her. Since he couldn't divorce her, he found a way to separate for now. In any case, they couldn't live together like before.

Wei Kun remained impassive, standing with his hands crossed behind his back, "Take these two maidservants and all your belongings from this room. I can't let you live together with Ah Luo, she's still young and needs better care. I'll raise her personally." He paused, then said, "As for the child you're carrying... After it's born, let fourth sister-in-law take over. You're unsuitable to bring up children. I'll talk to fourth sister-in-law to ask her for this favor."

Madam Du was stunned to no end, as if looking at a stranger in his place.

Granted that he didn't want her, but he even wanted to snatch away her child? What did he regard her as, after her pregnancy was over, he wouldn't even place her in his thoughts?

Madam Du lifted the covers to get out of bed, didn't bother putting on her shoes, and walked to him. She burst into tears, asking: "Do you really have to be so cruel? Don't you have at least some feelings for me? These many years, did I count for nothing in your heart?"

Wei Kun turned around to walk out of the main house, "It's not that I didn't have any feelings for you, but you went too far this time. I'll go, you pack your things now."

"Wei Sheng Ming!" Madam Du called after him furiously, anger and despair intertwined, her voice distorted beyond recognition, "You're still in love with Jiang Miaolan, right? You haven't forgotten her, right?"

Wei Kun paused in his steps and nodded, saying: "Yes."

Madam Du stood there absent-minded, staring at Wei Kun's back vacantly. After he left the room, she came back to her senses suddenly, and shouted at him: "The child I give birth to is mine, no one can take it away! You want to give it to fourth sister-in-law, no way!"

Unfortunately, Wei Kun was gone, and didn't respond to her.

She was full of rage and hatred. She hated Wei Kun's heartlessness, hated her own incompetence, hated Jiang Miaolan's existence!

She had lived for six years under her shadow. Though she had obtained Wei Kun, she had lost in the end. Lost to someone who had died six years ago.

She couldn't accept it.

Du Yueying gritted her teeth, staring at the entrance bitterly, her nails were digging deeply into her palms, and even if they broke,

she wouldn't feel the pain. Her tears streamed down unnoticed. She couldn't admit defeat. Wei Kun wanted her to move to Ginkgo courtyard, she'd move. As long as she had this baby, as long as she gave birth to a son, she didn't believe Wei Kun would not change his mind.

“Mother...”

A murmur reached her from the entrance.

Madam Du looked up, finding Wei Zheng standing at the door. Perhaps she had gotten frightened by her appearance, she was looking at her with red eyes, her face distressed.

# Chapter 10

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That night, Madam Du had all her things removed from Pine courtyard as she got settled at Ginkgo courtyard.

Duke Ying and the old madam knew of this, but hadn't said anything. It seemed that they had tacitly agreed. After all, everyone was well aware that although Nurse Dou had taken on someone else's sins, without Madam Du's approval, as her personal servant, she wouldn't dare act of her own initiative. If there wasn't the house of Count Zhongyi behind her, the Duke's family wouldn't have held back on the punishment. Moving her to Ginkgo courtyard was already considered fairly light.

So regarding this matter, everyone maintained their silence, making every effort to keep it secret. Wei Zheng was the only one making noise, loudly crying.

When Madam Du moved out, she grabbed onto her clothes, asking her not to leave, that it was all Ah Luo's fault. She placed all the blame on Ah Luo. If it wasn't for Wei Luo complaining to father, he wouldn't have gotten mad at mother, and mother wouldn't have had to move to a broken down courtyard.

She grew more and more angry. Glaring at Wei Luo with reddened eyes, her hands were feeling for something to grab and hurl towards Ah Luo: "It's all your fault!"

Tossing items aside, Wei Zheng blindly grasped onto something. As soon as she threw it, it turned out to be a pair of copper scissors.

Standing behind Wei Kun, Ah Luo didn't have to dodge. Wei Kun quickly picked her up, taking her out of harm's way.

Wei Kun was outraged. At this young age, Wei Zheng knew to get the scissors to wound others. After growing up, how would she turn out? He was disgusted with Madam Du. Thinking those were all things she had taught, he became increasingly colder to her, his

tone of voice somewhat fed-up: “Is this how you teach Wei Zheng? To have no regard for her elders! Ah Luo is her older sister, continuing like this, whatever’s next?”

Madam Du’s complexion was not good in the first place, having been reprimanded by him, she blanched even more. Clenching her teeth, she suffered through his reproach with making a sound.

Wei Kun also said: “If Zheng is still like this in the future, I’ll see to it that you won’t get to bring her up. When she learns decorum, then I’ll let her see you again.” Pausing for a bit, he added: “And Wei Zheng, you were too much to your older sister. You’ll be punished with no dinner, and kneeling at the ancestral shrine for half an hour.”

Madam Du felt her vision darken. She wanted to call his name, but he didn’t give her the opportunity to dispute. Holding Wei Luo, he turned around.

While he was walking, he was consoling Wei Luo: “Ah Luo, don’t be afraid. Daddy’s here, I’ll protect you.”

Wei Luo leaned on Wei Kun’s shoulder, and blinked her glittering pitch-black eyes, watching Madam Du mockingly.

And Wei Zheng, hearing about a punishment, was already alert. She was waiting for Madam Du to speak up for her, but Madam Du couldn’t save herself, how would she save her?

Wei Zheng cried despondently at her feet, looking in the direction Wei Kun and Wei Luo had departed, seemingly choking on something in her throat, almost spitting out blood in anger.

\*

In the evening, Wei Zheng came back from the shrine, and cried all night.

Ah Luo’s room happened to be next door to Wei Zheng’s. The weeping noise and the sobs passed through the walls, keeping Ah Luo up the whole night. Waking up the next morning, her

complexion looked very bad.

At daybreak, Wei Zheng was finally quiet, probably crying herself to sleep. Ah Luo lingered on her bed, unwilling to get up. In her mind, she grumbled about Wei Zheng a bit. Dallying for a long time, she reluctantly raised her thick, long eyelashes. Under the lashes, a pair of limpid, watery eyes like deep pools, gently rippled, sharp and charming.

She appeared annoyed, but who knew what she recalled, a smile suddenly bloomed on her face.

Why had Wei Zheng cried? Of course, it was because Madam Du had moved out.

Although she hadn't yet toppled Madam Du entirely, she wasn't anxious. She had a nice start. She hadn't gotten sold by Madam Du, and on top of that, she had managed to deal her a serious blow. Madam Du had lost father's trust, and also exposed her true nature. If she wanted to bring her down later, it would be much easier.

Ah Luo's fresh and tender small face had a smiling expression, appearing sweet on the outside, while concealing the innermost devious thoughts.

When Jin Lu came in, she happened to see her curled lips, and couldn't help smiling as she asked: "Miss, what are you thinking about? Such a happy look."

She sat up in bed. A pale white undergarment robe covered her tiny body, her soft and glossy black hair was draped over her shoulders, and after a night of tossing around, the even bangs were messily parted to two sides, revealing a tiny cinnabar birthmark between her eyebrows. Between Ah Luo's eyebrows there was a dark red beauty mark, but the bangs usually covered it, so it wasn't normally in view. Only during the moments that she was just waking up, it could occasionally be seen.



Jin Lu thought this birthmark was extremely pretty, right between the brows, enhancing Wei Luo's fine facial features. She resembled the young children by the lotus flower Bodhisattva\*. Her age was still small, but when she grew up, who knew how stunning she would turn out to be.

Wei Luo stood in front of her, waiting obediently with both arms spread, so she could change her clothes. She said with a sweet smile: "I was thinking of what to eat for breakfast. Elder sister Jin Lu, Ah Luo wants to eat sweet red bean paste rolls."

Jin Lu laughed as she gently helped her dress, "Fifth master knows that Miss likes to eat that, he already had the kitchen prepare it a while ago. Once Miss is properly dressed, I'll bring you to eat."

Wei Luo was startled, also thinking she had misunderstood.

Before, Wei Kun was always busy, he rarely had his meals together with Changhong and her. Even if they ate together, he'd be in a hurry to finish and run to the Imperial Academy. There had never been a case like today, where he would especially wait for her to have breakfast.

What happened?

Did he feel too guilty because of Madam Du, that he wanted to make it up to her?

Wei Luo didn't know she had only guessed half of it. Wei Kun not only wanted to make it up to her, he planned to take care of her personally in the future. He had thought it out well. The books from the Imperial Academy, he could take home to read. It would be good enough to only go there for his exams. That way he could free up a lot of time to look after Wei Luo and personally bring her up.

Curious, Wei Luo dutifully put on a cherry colored short coat with passion flower patterns, and a light yellow skirt, and then

headed for the main house. Her hair was tied with red silk ribbons in a bow-knot, the loose ends hanging by her ears. As long as the wind blew, the red ribbons would brush against her face, only to reveal eyes curved like the crescent moon\*, quick-witted and cute.

When she reached the entrance to the main house, she heard Wei Zheng's voice coming from inside: "I'm not eating! If Daddy doesn't let Mother return, I won't eat!"

Taking a look, she saw three people sitting at the round red sandalwood table with black and gold lacquer. Wei Kun was sitting in the middle impassively, on his left side was Changhong, on his right—Wei Zheng. Wei Zheng didn't want the maidservants to wait on her, threw the chopsticks down, and looked at Wei Kun with a pout.

Wei Kun ignored her. Looking up, he noticed Wei Luo coming in, his expression brightening: "Ah Luo, come sit down. After the meal, Daddy has something to tell you."

Wei Luo sat next to Changhong, to the opposite of Wei Zheng.

Wei Zheng was still mad at Wei Kun for yesterday's punishment, naturally her anger spread to Ah Luo as she stared indignantly at her. Ah Luo paid her no attention, she was only hurting herself by refusing to eat.

Ah Luo was very hungry. Since she couldn't neglect her own stomach, she deliberately leaned over to pick an emerald shark fin dumpling between her chopsticks: "What does Daddy want to tell me? Aw, Daddy, Ah Luo can't reach this..."

That dish was what Wei Zheng liked to eat the most, so the maidservants had gotten used to placing it in front of her. A moment ago, Wei Zheng had spitefully declared she wasn't going to eat, and Wei Kun had a mind to educate her by letting her suffer some setbacks, or else she would become too wilful with everything. Right away, he said to a maidservant: "Place this dish in front of the fourth Miss."

Wei Zheng had said she wouldn't eat in anger. She had cried a whole night, and crying also consumed energy, so now she was also absolutely hungry. She had meant for Wei Kun to coax her and let her mother join them. She hadn't expected that not only would he not coax her, but would also give her favorite dish to Wei Luo! Feeling wronged, she wanted to cry, however, she thought of the words that Madam Du had spoken to her yesterday, to restrain herself and to tolerate, and to hold her tears back. She could not cry, mother had said there was no use crying. She had to think of a method to rescue mother and reunite with her.

Wei Zheng looked anxiously at the emerald shark fin dumplings that were put in front of Wei Luo. One plate of steamed stuffed buns and one of seasoned bracken salad were the only dishes that remained in front of her, dishes that she didn't like.

Wei Luo pretended not to see Wei Zheng's line of sight, and clamped an emerald shark fin dumpling between her chopsticks to give to Changhong: "Changhong, eat more. Fourth Aunt said that if you eat a lot, you'll grow tall faster."

Hearing the last sentence, Changhong raised his eyes to look at her: "Can it also let me grow taller than you?"

At this age, girls grew quicker than boys. Even though they were born on the same day, Ah Luo was taller than Changhong by half a finger.

Ah Luo nodded with a smile: "Sure it can!"

She was chatting with Changhong harmoniously, talking and laughing, with Wei Kun occasionally inserting a sentence or two. No one took the initiative to talk to Wei Zheng, making her look like an outsider.

There used to be Madam Du before, who completely doted on her, and even personally fed her, though she was already five. Now that Madam Du wasn't there, she actually couldn't even feed herself.

Ah Luo and Changhong were done eating, while she was still sluggishly picking up the food. Wei Kun knitted his brows, saying to the children: "I've invited a gentleman for you, he'll teach you how to read and write. The gentleman will come over tomorrow, you should go and meet him first. Remember to greet him properly." Having said that, he turned to Wei Luo and Wei Zheng: "For the two of you, I've also invited a female tutor, she'll teach you manners and etiquette. Ah Zheng's behavior today of throwing the chopsticks cannot happen again."

Wei Zheng was quiet, not that interested about the tutor. Wei Luo, on the other hand, was looking forward to it very much.

In her previous life, she had grown up in a farmer's family. There had been one scholar in that village, who had been the only literate person. Though she had studied a little, it had been insufficient. In particular, when she had returned to the capital at 15, she had increasingly felt the gap between herself and the other noble ladies. Other people's manners had been elevated and splendid, even if they were standing still, they would attract attention. Her own face had been pretty, but she hadn't possessed the type of bearing they'd had, so she had fallen short in comparison.

She had still been young then, and hadn't known anything. Having grown up in those circumstances, the gap had only become more apparent.

Therefore, she had to take advantage of the fact, that she was on even grounds with the other noble ladies at this point in time. She was very eager to study poetry and etiquette. What her past self hadn't learned, she wanted to make up for it all, and become a genuine well-bred young lady of a prominent family.

Wei Luo blinked her eyes, asking: "What is the gentleman going to teach us? I've heard that third and fourth elder brothers were studying the Book of Songs (a collection of poetry), I also want to learn."

Wei Kun laughed, patting her head, "It's too early for you to study the Book of Songs. Let the gentleman teach you all the Three Character Classic first, and how to write letters." Thinking about it, he was feeling guilty towards Ah Luo, so he was more considerate of her, "Every day after your lectures, Ah Luo can come to my study, and I'll check your progress personally."

Wei Luo nodded and said 'yes', her answer crisp and sweet.

In contrast, Wei Zheng, who had been spoiled by Madam Du, wasn't able to read the mood, and was still throwing a tantrum: "I don't want this gentleman, I want mother! Daddy, let mother come back!"

When she had said that before, Wei Kun had deliberately not responded. As she kept mentioning it, Wei Kun also started to lose his temper, saying with a cold face: "In the future, you're not allowed to speak of this again. If you want her, go live with her in Ginkgo courtyard right away!"

Wei Zheng's eyes reddened from his chiding. Tears threatened to spill out, but she resolutely suppressed them in the end, causing her eye rims to turn red through and through.

Ah Luo didn't look at her. She placed her chopsticks down, saying: "I'm full. Daddy, I'll go look for fourth Aunt."

The Wei Zheng from her previous life liked to cry, cried when she was angry, cried when she felt wronged, also cried when she was scared. Ah Luo disliked this type of unreasonable behavior the most. She didn't know whether in this life, without Madam Du around, Wei Zheng would be able to grow up a little.

Changhong, seeing Ah Luo jumping down from the chair, quickly put down his chopsticks: "I'm also full!"

Only Wei Kun and Wei Zheng remained in the room. Wei Zheng ate one bite after another dejectedly, evidently scared by Wei Kun's solemn expression, she didn't dare to cry.

The third and fourth elder brothers Ah Luo had just mentioned, were precisely her fourth aunt's children. Third young master, Wei Changxian, was eleven years old this year, and the fourth young master, Wei Changchi was ten. Due to Ah Luo frequently visiting fourth aunt's house, she was quite close to those two cousins of hers.

When Ah Luo reached the Plum courtyard, she found it bustling with noise and excitement. From afar, she could hear barks and people's voices mixing together. She went to the backyard to take a look, and it turned out there was a Shandong hound (province, not an actual breed) inside. With a ferocious appearance, it looked like it wasn't a good idea to provoke it.

The courtyard maidservants were all terrified, continuously hiding to one side or another. Wei Changxian, that reckless young demon king, was pulling the dog along, laughing rampantly, and asking people: "This is the dog my maternal uncle got through great effort, how is it? Handsome?"

The maternal uncle he meant, was the youngest son of Marquis An Ling, Qin Ce. Qin Ce was 16 this year, still young, but his position in the family was rather high. Since they could play together, Wei Changxian would follow him around all day, getting to see many novelties in the process.

This dog was among those.

Wei Luo was standing at the entrance. Seeing the dog's fierce expression on its face, she hadn't moved.

Wei Changxian noticed her when he turned around. Thinking she was scared, he hurriedly passed the dog to a servant, and called out to her with a smile: "Little sister Ah Luo has come? Don't be afraid, that dog listens to me. It won't dare to bite you, if I don't let it."

Finished talking, he saw Ah Luo was still motionless. He was five years older than Ah Luo, and was delegated as a big brother. With a considerable mien of an older brother, he stepped forward to hold her soft small hand, and led her to enter the courtyard, "I'm going to use it in a contest against Song Hui, hopefully it can beat his skinny Shaanxi dog."

Hearing him mention Song Hui, Wei Luo stiffened slightly.

Song Hui and her had been set up as childhood sweethearts by their parents since an early age. During the time Jiang Miaolan had been pregnant with her, their engagement had been decided. Song Hui was six years older than her and took care of her like an older brother. Her past self had believed she would marry him one day, and become his little wife. But to her disappointment, she had gone missing for a decade, ten years later returning to Duke Ying's residence, only to discover that Song Hui had been engaged to Wei Zheng.

Originally, Song Hui wasn't hers. Even if they switched the fiancée, he was still able to marry her all the same.

Since her rebirth, Wei Luo hadn't seen Song Hui.

Wei Changxian was speaking enthusiastically, warmly inviting her: "I want to bring it to Count Zhongyi's residence tomorrow, and let it fight Song Hui's hound. Little sister Ah Luo, do you want to go together?"

# Chapter 11

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To go or not to go?

Ah Luo hesitated for a while, “Father invited a gentleman tutor for me, tomorrow he’ll come over...”

In fact, she wanted to go. In her previous life she had missed too many things, so in this life she wanted to make up for all of it. Moreover, there was also Song Hui. Song Hui was the legitimate eldest grandson of Count Zhongyi’s residence and was doted on a lot. To Count Zhongyi’s wife, he was the apple of her eye and the joy of her heart. Normally, she couldn’t even bear to scold him. Even Madam Du had to treat him courteously whenever she saw him. Nevertheless, Song Hui was very good to Ah Luo, he loved her as if she was his own younger sister.

Ah Luo hadn’t thought much about it before, but now she had to wonder, how much of Song Hui’s feelings for her had been sincere? Probably not too much, otherwise he wouldn’t have immediately turned around to marry Wei Zheng.

Wei Changxian waved her worries away, his manner like someone who had been around the block a few times: “Tomorrow is his first visit, he definitely won’t start teaching you anything. After you’ve seen the gentleman, you should meet up with me again so we can go. Little sister Ah Luo, this dog contest will be really fun, if you don’t see it, you’ll regret it later...”

Ah Luo’s lips lifted in a smile, lowering her head gently, “Alright then, I’ll come. Third elder brother must protect me, I’m afraid the dog will bite me...”

Wei Changxian was nodding repeatedly, “Very well, I’ll protect you.”

From the youngest generation in Duke Ying’s residence, there were altogether five young ladies. The eldest miss was out with the



eldest madam. She was going to marry next year. Her husband, Sun Ying, was the son of a great general. The eldest miss had recently been busy making her bridal clothes and embroidering her veil. Finding her at rest was highly unlikely. The second miss, Wei Di, was timid by nature, and didn't like to play with them. The third miss Wei Ya and the fifth miss Wei Zheng got along well. Their ages were also close to Wei Luo, but Wei Changxian didn't enjoy taking them out to play. He thought the both of them were too noisy, bringing them together, they would chirp endlessly, even worse than sparrows. In comparison, he preferred the cute as a flower Wei Luo, especially her quick-witted, clever eyes. One could immediately tell she was a spirited girl. From all the younger sisters, she was the one he was happiest to hang out with. In addition, the fourth madam was more intimate with Ah Luo, so Wei Changxian and Wei Changchi's relationship with Ah Luo was much better compared to the rest of the young girls. Like for this dog contest, Wei Changxian wished to bring Ah Luo, rather than Wei Ya and Wei Zheng.

Ah Luo had just nodded in agreement, when she felt a hand tugging at her sleeve from behind. Turning to look, she saw Changhong pursing his tender pink lips into a line, looking at her with his big reticent eyes, not saying a word.

He clearly didn't want her to go.

Changhong disliked speaking in front of others. Even though they lived in the same residence, he was not that familiar with the third or fourth elder brothers. Meeting them, he basically wouldn't even utter a greeting. Today, if it wasn't for Wei Luo coming over, he also wouldn't have run over to the fourth branch house.

Ah Luo could see what he was thinking and asked with a grin: "Does Changhong also want to go?"

Wei Changhong gaped, unconsciously shaking his head. He didn't like Song Hui, and didn't like Count Zhongyi's residence. He

was definitely not going, so he was naturally hoping that Wei Luo wouldn't either.

Ah Luo pretended not to notice. Since she had already witnessed Song Hui's personal character, she wasn't going to involve herself with him too much in this life. As for their marriage, she was absolutely not going to marry Song Hui, but she wanted to feel him out... Ah Luo said to Wei Changxian: "Third elder brother, can Changhong also go? I'll look after him well."

Wei Changxian nodded in agreement, thought for a bit and added: "Let's call third and fifth younger sisters to go as well, it'll be livelier with more people."

Although he didn't like playing together with Wei Ya and Wei Zheng, having many people to cheer for him during the key moment was also good. He wanted to show off in the contest, he couldn't always lose to Song Hui.

Wei Luo rolled her eyes, her pursed lips breaking into a smile, "Alright, I'll tell Wei Zheng as soon as I go back."

With everything settled, Ah Luo and Changhong remained at the fourth branch house for a while, staying over to eat with the fourth madam at noon, and returning to Pine courtyard in the afternoon. Ah Luo told Wei Zheng of their plan to visit Count Zhongyi's residence tomorrow. Count Zhongyi's house could be partly considered as Madam Du's maternal home, so Wei Zheng, certainly willing to go, immediately agreed.

Once Wei Kun returned in the evening, Ah Luo spoke to him about this matter. Thinking that the gentleman wouldn't start teaching tomorrow, he allowed the children to go play. Just a few days ago Ah Luo had experienced something frightful, so it was a good idea to let her relax her mind.

\*

The next morning, Wei Kun brought the three of them to meet

the tutor.

Teacher Xue was an old man in his fifties, with the air of a scholar about him, full of wisdom and experience. When he spoke, his dangling mustache would jump up and down, looking very amusing. The female teacher on etiquette was Mrs. Han. Mrs. Han was over 40 this year. Rumors said she used to be a palace maid serving the Dowager Consort, before leaving the palace. The Dowager Consort was deeply fond of her for her great accomplishments and graceful temper, as well as her secret method of maintaining her appearance. Despite her age, she still looked like a young lady in her twenties, with an exquisite white skin, an elegant figure, earning the envy of a great deal of madams. During those days, because the Dowager Consort had her by her side, she was most favored, frequently receiving the Retired Emperor's love.

Wei Luo knew of Mrs. Han's past, and looked at her with shining eyes. It would be great if she could learn that secret of hers. Not only a beautiful appearance, but also the finest temperament, how could she not take advantage?

Once Wei Luo was done making plans, she obediently stepped forward to greet the two teachers. She showed respect to Mr. Xue and Mrs. Han, by serving them individually a cup of tea, saying in a sweet small voice: "Teacher, please have some tea."

Mr. Xue nodded, and Mrs. Han also showed a faint smile, evidently satisfied with this student.

Though a little stiff, Wei Changhong still followed Wei Luo's example by serving tea.

On the other hand, Wei Zheng pouted from start to finish, her whole face showing reluctance. Eventually, Wei Kun had to call her over, before she slowly went to pour tea, greeting the teachers.

Having this contrast, it highlighted Wei Luo's sensibility all the more. Although Mrs. Han was a palace maid, she was close to the

Dowager Consort, so many people had to show her courtesy. When Wei Kun had sent people to ask her to act as a teacher, she hadn't wished to agree, but in order to preserve Duke Ying's dignity, she had nodded. At first, she had believed the two delicate misses were pampered and spoiled since childhood, their ages also young, with poor discipline. She hadn't expected to find among them such a well-behaved child, whose laughing face showed two shallow dimples on her cheeks, looking charming. Mrs. Han liked Wei Luo at a glance, and didn't feel that the job would be hard.

The two teachers decided on a good schedule. Mr. Xue would give lessons in the morning, and in the afternoon Mrs. Han would teach etiquette. The classes would officially start tomorrow. They said a few words explaining the rules, as Wei Luo kept nodding. Half an hour later, they let them go.

Wei Changxian already couldn't wait, he'd ordered people to check on Pine courtyard several times. As soon as they came out, he eagerly led them to Count Zhongyi's residence.

## Chapter 12

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Count Zhongyi's residence couldn't compare to Duke Ying residence's grandiose style, but it too was vast and magnificent, and richly decorated. In front of the entrance stood two awe-inspiring guardian lion statues. The red lacquer gate was wide open. The gatekeeper knew that Duke Ying family's misses and young masters were coming for a visit, so he rushed to welcome them in with a smile.

Wei Changxian took his Shandong dog along to jump down from the carriage, walking ahead full of confidence. He had spent a long time training this dog, and he was convinced he would definitely be able to beat Song Hui this time. Besides Duke Ying residence's carriage at the entrance, there was an additional luxurious carriage with an azure rooftop and red tassels parked there. Wei Luo looked over curiously. The gatekeeper could immediately discern her interest, and explained enthusiastically: "This is Marquis Pingyuan's carriage. Marquis Pingyuan family's successor and their miss have also come, they're currently in the rear court garden."

Wei Luo's eyes shone.

Marquis Pingyuan Liang Songnian was a well-established, handsome middle-aged man, who lead a clean and honest life, and never tried to participate in any political faction. He had earned Emperor Chong Zhen's affection. But that wasn't what Wei Luo was happy about, rather it was the news that Marquis Pingyuan residence's heir and their miss had also come. Marquis Pingyuan's wife and Jiang Miaolan were sworn sisters. After Jiang Miaolan had left, Marquis Pingyuan's wife had been looking after the pair of sister and brother, Wei Luo and Changhong. Marquis Pingyuan's family had altogether one son and one daughter. As the porter had said, they were obviously the successor Liang Yu and miss Liang Yurong. Liang Yurong and Wei Luo were about the

same age. The two of them had gotten along well since childhood, and their dispositions were compatible as well, so they'd become very close friends.

Wei Luo hadn't seen Liang Yurong for a long time, and had almost forgotten what she'd looked like as a child. In her past life, she had especially inquired after the girl's affairs, but had regretfully found out she hadn't fared well at all, making people feel very sorry for her.

Wei Changxian didn't detect her peculiar mood. Learning that Song Hui was in the backyard, he impatiently lead his dog along to find him.

Wei Ya and Wei Zheng promptly followed, with Wei Luo and Changhong walking behind them. Ah Luo had been absent-minded for some time now. Only when Changhong called her name, did she regain her composure in a flash.

"What were you thinking about?"

Ah Luo blinked, and lied without the slightest change of expression, "I was wondering whose dog will win between third elder brother and big brother Song Hui."

Changhong disliked Song Hui, so whether he really believed it or not, he said: "My guess is third elder brother will win."

Ah Luo didn't express an opinion. Holding his hand, they soon reached the rear court's lotus pond. It was the beginning of spring, lotus flowers were spread over the pond on dark green leaves, but they hadn't yet opened their buds. However, the dangling branches of the numerous crabapple trees at the shore were just entering their most gorgeous and graceful period, the pink and white blossoms each striving to bloom, more beautiful than anything. There were some branches unable to support the weight of the flowers, and a few petals gently drifted down. Just as Ah Luo was walking below the trees, a petal landed on her lashes. She blinked delicately, causing the petal to slide along her smooth and

soft white cheek. Raising her eyes, she caught sight of a lean, refined youth standing below an eight-sided gazebo not too far from her.

Only turning twelve this year, his age wasn't very high. His stature was comparatively tall. He was dressed in a purple robe embroidered with golden bamboo leaves pattern, on his waist hung a mutton fat jade (nephrite) ornament. His appearance was dazzling, with a beautiful face.

This person was Song Hui.

Song Hui was truly good-looking. Among all the men Ah Luo had seen, only he appeared without the slightest defect, like a fine piece of carved jade, one couldn't pick out a single flaw. In addition to that, his demeanor was remarkable as well. Such as right now, he was just casually standing over there, yet easily attracted both of Wei Ya and Wei Zheng's attention.

Her past self had liked that face of his right away. Though she had been too young to understand the sentiments between men and women, she could already distinguish between beautiful and ugly.

She had to say, Jiang Miaolan had arranged for a very good marriage for her. Still, thinking of Song Hui's engagement to Wei Zheng in the past life, Ah Luo's heart was simply unable to agree to the marriage. Even the slightest interest in Song Hui was entirely gone.

\*

Apart from Song Hui, there was his younger sister Song Ruwei, as well as Liang Yu and Liang Yurong inside the eight-sided gazebo.

Song Ruwei was eight this year. Her appearance couldn't measure up to her older brother's good looks, but she was nevertheless a little young lady with delicate features. She was Wei Zheng's older maternal cousin, she was naturally more intimate

with Wei Zheng. Seeing Wei Zheng approaching, she called out from afar: “Little sister Ah Zheng!”

Due to her exclamation, the people in the gazebo all turned their attention to them. Wei Zheng called out ‘cousin’, then cheerfully ran over.

Returning to Count Zhongyi’s residence made Wei Zheng feel more at ease, since the people here would treat her nicely. She was actually happier being here than at home.

Wei Luo didn’t mind Song Ruwei’s disregard. Lowering her head to brush away a few crabapple petals from her sleeves, she leisurely stepped inside the eight-sided gazebo.

Song Hui was standing on the gazebo’s stone steps. Once he greeted Wei Zheng, his gaze fell on Wei Luo. After waiting for Wei Luo to get closer, he reached out a hand to take a blossom from the top of her head, saying with a smile: “There isn’t a single petal on other people’s bodies, they only fell on little sister Ah Luo. It seems my family’s crabapples have some fate with you?”

He’d known of their arranged betrothal since he was six. At the time he hadn’t been very clear about the meaning of taking a wife, only that people would have babies afterward. When Ah Luo was still an infant, he had carried her in his arms a few times. She had been so tiny, her face round and tender, had liked nibbling on her own finger, and cooing incoherently to call him ‘big brother’. After growing up, he had gradually started to understand what marriage was, that this small young girl belonged to him, and that later, they would spend their lifetime together. So his treatment of Ah Luo had also become special, and he had placed her above all the other little girls.

Wei Luo turned to look at him with her pitch black eyes, received the blossom from him, then solemnly placed it in his hand, and said in a sweet voice: “I’m giving it to big brother Song Hui.”

Song Hui’s face held a smile. He earnestly played along and



wrapped the blossom in a cloth, then put it in his sleeve.

Over at the rock table behind them, Liang Yu exclaimed ‘Ah’, and stood up to ask: “Stop with the nonsense already, are we having this contest or not? Today I especially requested for a day off from my tutor to come here, how long are you planning to dilly-dally? Song Hui, your dog? Quickly take it out and let us have a look.”

Liang Yu was eleven this year. He was wearing a sapphire blue robe. With sharp eyes and strong brows, his appearance was handsome, and he resembled Marquis Pingyuan 70 to 80 percent. Since he practiced martial arts since childhood, although he was younger than Song Hui by a year, he was as tall as him, and even appeared a little sturdier. On his left side was Liang Yurong, who was wearing a dress with a hundred pink and indigo butterflies stitched across it. Liang Yurong beckoned for Wei Luo to come and take a seat.

Wei Luo sat down next to her.

The two of them had last met at the feast in Shangyuan palace, it had been more than a month ago. Liang Yurong attached herself to her ear to whisper: “Daddy let the servants cook and eat elder brother’s dog, he’s hopping mad right now...”

Ah Luo didn’t hold back, giggling out loud.

Fortunately, these words didn’t reach Liang Yu, otherwise he would fly into a rage out of shame.

Song Hui ordered the servants to bring his slender Shaanxi hound over. That dog generally took after his owner, with a proud appearance and a noble countenance, far more impressive than the common dogs. In reality, dog fighting wasn’t any sort of glorious affair. As long as one’s family had a little standing, the family’s elders wouldn’t consent to let their progeny raise dogs, finding it an idle activity that distracted their minds away from attending to their proper duties. Therefore, Marquis Pingyuan cooking Liang Yu’s dog could actually be considered pardonable.

As for Wei Changxian and Song Hui, the former was the little despot in his family, the latter was extremely outstanding, and neither of their families was particularly restrictive... As long as it didn't interfere with their studies, it was possible to make allowances.

The two dogs started the scuffle. As far as these little girls Wei Luo and Liang Yurong were concerned, it was nothing appealing. But to Liang Yu it was very interesting. Since he couldn't join in, he urged Changhong, Ah Luo and the rest to lay a bet, himself included. He put down a hundred silvers.

Ah Luo didn't have any money on her, since her purse was left for safeguarding with Jin Lu and Nurse Ye. She casually took off the silver longevity locket with blue butterflies from around her neck and passed it to Liang Yu, "This is my longevity locket, I'm giving it to you."

Liang Yurong gave a jade belt ornament, Song Ruwei put down ten silvers, Wei Ya and Wei Zheng, who also hadn't brought money, each put down a jadeite bracelet and a sachet embroidered with gold and silver threads. Changhong naturally didn't participate in such things, and didn't place a bet.

From the six people, only one had wagered on Wei Changxian's dog to win, that person was precisely Wei Luo.

If it had been before, Wei Luo would have definitely wagered on Song Hui, but at present she had changed her mind. Upon learning this, Song Hui turned around and glanced at her perplexed, his expression somewhat discontented.

However, Ah Luo didn't see it, cheering Wei Changxian on instead: "Third elder brother must win!"

Wei Changxian truly enjoyed it on the inside, but his mouth spoke: "Not your third ebrother, rather your third elder brother's dog must win. Ah Luo, look carefully, third elder brother is determined to win and help you get your longevity locket back!"

Ah Luo said ‘okay’, and heavily nodded her head.

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The two big dogs were fighting together, each bite creating wounds on their bodies, loud barks could be heard all over Count Zhongyi’s residence. Because it looked too savage, Liang Yurong and Song Ruwei, those two young ladies, gradually got a little scared, and distanced themselves. Ah Luo also followed after them, arriving under a crabapple tree by the lotus pond.

Song Ruwei proposed a game of hide-and-seek, taking out a cloth with winding peonies embroidery to serve as a blindfold. Whoever was caught would lose. At first, Ah Luo didn’t want to play, but she was now a six year old little girl, behaving too unusually for herself would make people suspicious. Under Liang Yurong’s prompting, she also nodded to agree.

As a start, they drew lots to pick the person in charge of chasing. Pulling out the longest stick, Ah Luo was responsible for the first round.

The cloth currently covered her eyes, her vision turned dim, she couldn’t see anything. She could only hear the numerous and disorderly noise of footsteps and barks in her surroundings. Extending both hands forward to feel about, she took a few steps, but couldn’t catch anyone, her hands landing on a crabapple tree instead.

Liang Yurong laughed from behind: “Wrong, wrong, it’s not that one!”

She had no choice but to change directions and go on fumbling about. Not far from here, the noise of the dog fight grew more excited and covered up this side’s sounds, to the extend of making her somewhat disoriented. She didn’t know which direction was good to pursue right now. There was someone ahead, who snapped a branch off the crabapple tree, and softly touched her shoulder with it, luring her to go forward.

Ah Luo took two steps forward, then paused. She remembered that the crabapple trees were planted at the edge of the lotus pond. Walking forward a few steps, it was possible that she would fall into the water. Just a moment ago, Liang Yurong's voice had come from behind. If the pond wasn't behind, then it was precisely in the direction she was walking. She bent her lips in a small smile. She could roughly guess who it was, that was trying to steer her over here, but she didn't speak up. She deliberately walked a few steps forward again.

Wei Zheng stood in front of her, threw away the crabapple branch, and provoked: "Wei Luo, come catch me!"

Ah Luo cried out in surprise, "Wei Zheng?"

As she spoke, she took a step forward, standing by the edge of the pool with Wei Zheng. As soon as she took one more step, she would fall into the pond. The water in spring was still very chilly, falling in would most likely lead to a cold. Wei Zheng's age wasn't big, but her ideas, in contrast, weren't lacking. Intentionally leading Wei Luo to the pond's edge, it was to watch her fall into it.

Unfortunately, Wei Luo wasn't fooled. She accurately held out her hands to capture Wei Zheng's sleeve, secretly exerting her strength to give Wei Zheng a push back, "Caught you!"

Wei Zheng wasn't standing steady, staggering backwards, she fell. Panic-stricken, she intuitively grabbed onto Wei Luo's hand, thinking of dragging her along into the water.

At the other side, the result of the dog fighting had already come out. Unsurprisingly, Wei Changxian had lost to Song Hui and the two of them were now walking over to this side. Song Hui saw from a distance away the state of the two little girls close to the pond. Right when he wanted to shout at them to be careful, he saw Wei Zheng stumbling and falling into the water. Wei Luo was blindfolded, and was unable to see the situation. Her hands were stretched out helplessly, just enough for Wei Zheng to grab onto

them. It looked like the two of them were both about to fall into the pond. He dashed forward quickly, his arms embraced Wei Luo's waist, and lifted her up.

Song Hui only had time to help one person, and he saved Wei Luo. With a 'splash', Wei Zheng fell into the lotus pond, her head soon getting submerged under the water.

# Chapter 13

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Wei Luo tore off the cloth covering her eyes, and called out in surprise: “Ah Zheng?”

The little girl’s pupils were pure and clear like water, her confused and helpless manner was without the slightest hint of falsehood. She seemed to have gotten scared by the scene before her. Tightly grasping onto the hem of Song Hui’s clothes, she burrowed into his chest, preventing him from going to save Wei Zheng, “Big brother Song Hui, I’m very scared, how come Wei Zheng fell into the water? I didn’t know she was standing on the edge, she called me over to catch her...”

Song Hui gently patted her back to comfort her, signaling for Liang Yu to rescue the other girl, as he carried Wei Luo over to a safe spot by the pond, “Don’t be scared, don’t be scared, it’ll be okay. That area has always been wet and slippery, if one doesn’t pay attention, they could easily fall into the pond. It’s all my fault for not telling you all earlier...”

Liang Yu had practiced martial arts to build up his strength from childhood, and was even better at swimming. It didn’t take him long to carry Wei Zheng out of the pond. It was only for a few moments, but Wei Zheng had drunk a lot of water and was clearly scared silly. Having been placed on the ground by Liang Yu, she couldn’t regain her senses for a long time, shivering with cold as she hugged herself.

She had wanted to harm Wei Luo, she didn’t think she’d harm herself instead... After all, she was still a small child. Feeling that she had received a grievance, she couldn’t help but immediately cry, big round tears rolling down from her eyes. She was rubbing her eyes as she cried. On top of that, when she fell into the lotus pond, she had smacked her nose. Bright red blood was now flowing out of it. Since she was rubbing at her face, the blood had gotten smeared all over, making for a rather ghastly sight.

The several people at the side were also frightened by this appearance of hers. Song Ruwei was the first one to react and go over. She hurriedly took off a maidservant's coat to drape over Wei Zheng's shoulders, and took out a silk cloth to wipe off the bloodstains from her face: "Quickly lift your chin, don't lower your head, or the blood flow will get worse... Younger sister Ah Zheng, how is it? Are there any other injuries besides this one?"

Wei Zheng stopped crying with great difficulty, and said through sniffles and sobs: "No, none..."

Seeing her like that, Song Ruwei felt sorry for her and turned her head to ask Wei Luo: "Ah Zheng fell into the water, but you, as her older sister, didn't even realize. The both of you stood by the edge, why is it that only you are alright?"

Her words were too unreasonable. Even though Ah Luo and Wei Zheng had both been standing by the edge right then, who didn't know that Ah Luo had been blindfolded? Moreover, at that time it was Wei Zheng, who had guided Wei Luo there. Once the accident happened, it was because of Song Hui promptly rushing over, that Wei Luo had narrowly escaped the disaster.

Song Ruwei's partiality was rather too obvious.

Standing nearby, Liang Yurong got annoyed as she heard this, and immediately jumped in to refute: "Big sister Ruwei means to blame Ah Luo? Ah Luo was blindfolded then, but Wei Zheng could clearly see. She, herself, decided to go to the pond's edge, but still wants to blame others when something bad happened. What kind of logic is this? If big brother Song Hui hadn't saved Ah Luo, would Ah Luo be alright now? Or do you mean to say that big brother Song Hui should rescue Wei Zheng, but shouldn't bother with Ah Luo?"

Those few derisive remarks rendered Song Ruwei speechless for a good while.

Liang Yurong and Wei Luo both had the same skill, namely their

innate eloquence. Arguing with others, they would never lose. How else would they have become such close friends? After all, birds of a feather flock together, it was the same for people.

Song Ruwei took a few breaths. Unwilling to resign, she came up with a good excuse, and responded: “I mean...”

“Wei Wei.” Song Hui called out her name, his expression somewhat disapproving, “The pond water is cold, quickly take little sister Ah Zheng to change her clothes. Don’t waste time here.”

This tone obviously meant to say she was making a scene.

Song Ruwei couldn’t go back to her previous imposing manner. Her heart was unwilling, but she didn’t dare defy her brother’s words. With no other choice, she mumbled an ‘Oh’, and instructed an old servant behind her: “Quickly take little sister Ah Zheng back to my room and let her change into my clothes.”

Wei Zheng’s nosebleed had already stopped. The small, deathly pale face was freezing. When the old servant picked her up to go back, she was still endlessly shivering.

This event ought to become a lesson for her, right?

Wei Luo’s small head popped up from within Song Hui’s embrace, looking in the direction Wei Zheng had departed, disdain flashing through her eyes. She was actually hoping Wei Zheng would become a little smarter through this experience, otherwise, she’d also get bored of always fooling around with such inferior schemes. By that time, she wouldn’t have the patience to play with her.

Her shoulders suddenly felt heavier, her body wrapped in warmth. Ah Luo turned her head to look, and found that Song Hui had just taken off his outer robe to put it on her. Song Hui rubbed her head: “Ah Luo’s clothes are also wet, do you want to go change into clean clothes?”



When Wei Zheng had fallen in, some water had splashed onto Ah Luo's clothes, drenching a large area. It hadn't dried yet.

Wei Luo shook her head, her tone light, "It'll dry soon, it's not in the way." Saying so, she thought for a while, then looked up at Song Hui to say gratefully: "Thank you, big brother Song Hui, for saving me."

Song Hui smiled weakly, thinking of saying something, but eventually settled on: "Thank me for what? This is what I ought to do."

He had saved Ah Luo, but hadn't saved Ah Zheng. That wasn't something worth getting thanked for. At that time, Wei Zheng's situation had been more dangerous, but why hadn't he rescued Wei Zheng first?

After some deliberation, Song Hui supposed it was because Wei Luo had been nearer to him, so he'd done it subconsciously, without thinking too much.

Song Hui lowered his head, meeting Wei Luo's sparkling black large eyes, his heart couldn't help going soft. Taking something from within his sleeve, it was actually the silver longevity locket with blue butterflies that Ah Luo had wagered earlier. He placed it around her neck with a somewhat helpless look, "This longevity locket is what I gave you on your birthday last year as a present, how could you take it down for a bet? Granted you had wagered it, but it wasn't even for my win. Doesn't Ah Luo have any confidence in big brother Song Hui?"

Wei Luo blinked her eyes bewildered. She had entirely forgotten about the locket's origins. Every year, she'd receive so many gifts for her birthday, enough to get dizzy. How could she possibly remember each one? In addition, Song Hui had said it was last year's gift. Though it was last year, it had been quite a long time since then in her memories. She simply couldn't recall it. When she went out today, it was Jin Lu who had told her to wear the

locket. If Song Hui hadn't mentioned it, she still wouldn't have known.

Wei Luo traced the longevity locket, explaining rationally: "I knew big brother Song Hui would win, so I wagered on third elder brother. If I had also wagered on big brother Song Hui, no one would have bet on third elder brother's win. Third elder brother would have surely felt sad."

Song Hui hadn't expected that she had put so much thought into this. Pleased, he smiled and said: "So it was like that. Our Ah Luo is very sensible."

The little bit of frustration, that he'd felt just a moment ago, suddenly vanished. What was he doing, bickering with a six year old child over a small problem like that? Besides, she was entirely unaware of it.

Song Hui tapped her tiny nose, and urged: "You should properly wear this longevity locket. You may not casually take it off again in the future, or else big brother Song Hui will get angry."

Wei Luo appeared to understand without really grasping the issue, muttered an 'Oh', and asked intentionally: "Also can't take it off in the bath?"

Song Hui laughed cheerfully, in a clear and pleasant tone: "Of course you can. Silly Ah Luo, how would you take a bath wearing it?"

Wei Luo was by no means silly. She merely wanted to see his reaction and nothing more. In the end, he still treated her as a six year old child. Wei Luo lowered her head to play with the longevity locket around her neck. Her body was now six years old, shouldn't she pretend to be one? Song Hui took a small verbal win over her just now, but she would get him back one day.

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Wei Zheng had caught a cold, and had hurt her nose as well. How

long could they possibly stay at Count Zhongyi's residence? They prepared to return to Duke Ying's residence during lunch.

Just before they left, Song Hui handed Wei Luo something wrapped in oil paper, full and bulging inside. As he brought it closer, a sweet and fragrant scent wafted by.

Wei Luo received it, and asked curiously: "What is this?"

Song Hui answered with a smile: "This is the dried lychees that father brought back from the South. There weren't many of them. Thinking that Ah Luo likes eating sweet stuff, I especially left some for you."

Lychees were a fruit unique to the South. Ordinarily, they didn't get transported north, and even if they did, they wouldn't be fresh. Still, people had found a very clever method. They would remove the lychees' shells and pits, and soak them in a jar of honey, letting them dry in the sun. That resulted in the most popular candied fruit at present. It could both be preserved for a long time, and meet the needs of the Northern people, who wanted to taste the lychee fruit. Moreover, they wouldn't lose their sweet taste. Because the process was complex, and they had to be transported over a thousand li, these dried lychees were not at all cheap. The small packet Song Hui had given her, was enough to buy the longevity locket around Ah Luo's neck. Even so, there were many well-bred young ladies in the capital, who loved eating them. The reason being that not only was the dried lychee's flavor sweet, but it was also beneficial for the life force (qi) and could enrich the blood, it was very effective.

Ah Luo put one in her mouth, the lychee's sweetness quickly spreading inside. There was still some juice preserved in the candied fruit. Biting through with her teeth, the juice rapidly flowed out, so sweet that she couldn't help squinting her eyes. The advantages of eating a dried lychee was that one didn't need to peel off the skin, nor spit out the pit. After she was done chewing, Ah Luo swallowed, her voice also becoming a little sweeter: "Thank

you, big brother Song Hui. Ah Luo likes it.”

Song Hui slightly curled his lips, “It’s good that you like it. However, you shouldn’t eat too many, eating too many will likely cause excessive internal heat.” (related to Chinese medicine, qi, etc.)

From the side, Wei Zheng was observing enviously. She pouted and mumbled to herself: “Why did elder cousin only give to Wei Luo, and didn’t give me any... I also like eating dried lychees, elder cousin is biased.”

Song Hui stroked Wei Zheng’s head kindly, and explained: “Ah Zheng’s nose has recently bled, so you cannot eat lychees. If you eat some, the blood may flow even stronger.”

Wei Zheng looked anxiously at the oil paper packet in Wei Luo’s hands, half believing and half doubting Song Hui’s words. Her expression eventually eased up, no longer feeling aggrieved.

That was more or less Song Hui’s talent, and also his only shortcoming. Wei Luo shoved another dried lychee in her mouth to suck on, and pondered indifferently. Song Hui would show a gentle and amiable appearance to anyone, and didn’t really know how to reject others. It was still alright when he was a child, but it would easily cause misunderstandings once he grew up. Whether people were aware of his natural disposition or not, he would look like a playboy, kind to anyone. That was why Wei Zheng was always noisy around him, he would only scold her half-heartedly and be too forgiving. In fact, that was simply his character, he didn’t really like other girls.

But that was also no good, as Ah Luo was intensely possessive. If she married someone and that person dared to be good to some other girl, she would certainly break his legs and lock him in a room, where he would have no choice but to be good to her only, unable to see anyone else.

Back in Duke Ying's residence, Wei Luo and Changhong directly returned to Pine courtyard, while Wei Zheng turned around halfway to go back in the direction of Ginkgo courtyard, presumably to find Madam Du in order to complain.

She was truly pitiful today, not only falling in the water, but also hurting her nose. Who knew how sorry for her Madam Du would feel once she saw her.

Wei Luo rested her head on both hands, visualizing Madam Du's appearance throwing a fit. She couldn't help smiling, as she called for Jin Lu to come in: "Elder sister Jin Lu, where is daddy?"

Jin Lu took a wet cloth to wipe Ah Luo's hands, while stating: "Fifth master has just come back from outside, and has brought back some guests. He's currently entertaining the guests in the front courtyard. Miss, do you want to see Master?"

Wei Luo shook her head, saying quite honestly: "We went to Count Zhongyi's residence today, Wei Zheng wasn't careful and fell in the water. She went to find Madam to complain, Madam will surely demand to see daddy. Recently, just at the mention of her, daddy's mood will get bad. Elder sister Jin Lu, I don't want to let daddy see her. Moreover, Wei Zheng got diagnosed at Count Zhongyi's residence, and it was nothing major. Daddy has been a bit more cheerful these last two days, could we not let Madam affect daddy's mood?"

She spoke those words reasonably, and Jin Lu immediately nodded, "Miss is thinking of master. Once master learns of it, he'll surely be very happy. Miss can relax, this maid will go to Ginkgo courtyard. If the person inside demands to see the fifth master, this maid will say that fifth master is entertaining guests, so it's inconvenient to meet the madam."

Wei Luo curved her eyes (^ ^), thinking to herself that Jin Lu was really astute, understanding everything right off, without needing to be told explicitly.

And Wei Kun was indeed entertaining guests in the front courtyard, those words were not false.

Just as expected, when Madam Du heard Wei Zheng's tearful complaints, she got upset and immediately said she had to see Wei Kun. Currently, she wasn't by Wei Zheng's side and couldn't constantly look after her. The day had just started and she had already gotten into an accident. Then how would it be like in the future? How would Zheng get to live? She was thinking of using this opportunity to convince Wei Kun to let her move back in Pine courtyard, however the maidservant spoke a few words, explaining that Wei Kun was with guests and didn't have the spare time to meet her.

Angry and hopeless, she intended to rush outside, but there were two bodyguards watching the entrance of Ginkgo courtyard. As soon as she approached, the bodyguards blocked her way.

The two bodyguards were unmovable, ignoring anything she said, truly infuriating.

Madam Du was extremely angry, but thinking of her pregnancy, it wasn't good to get stirred up, so she forced herself to calm down. Unfortunately, it was useless. Walking back and forth, she only got angrier instead.

In Pine courtyard, Wei Luo was preparing for tomorrow's lesson with Mr. Xue, when a maidservant called Jin Wu entered to announce: "Fourth Miss, fifth master has invited you to the front courtyard."

Wei Luo jumped down from the decorated pear wood chair, and patted the dust from the book cover, "He invited me? Why?"

Jin Wu shook her head, "This maid also doesn't know, it seemed like he wanted to let you meet someone."

To meet someone? Who?

Wei Luo was unsure of the purpose. She placed the 'Zeng guang

xian wen' (to widen the virtuous youth's culture), which she had pulled out from the bookshelf, onto a red sandalwood table with black and gold lacquer, her young voice saying: "Alright then, I'll go have a look."

Jin Wu led the way, passing through the corridor with folded arms. They went through the main hall to arrive at the entrance hall, stopping on the patio outside the front courtyard. On the way, Ah Luo had been trying to guess whom Wei Kun wanted her to meet. That was until she saw the image of a man standing by the gate of the front courtyard...

Wasn't that the bodyguard Zhu Geng, who had carried her off on that day?

The person inside...

Wei Luo had a hunch who it was.

Sure enough, as soon as she walked in, she noticed a youth sitting on the ironwood chair ahead. The youth was wearing a sky-blue lined robe with gold brocade, an ivory folding fan and a jade ornament with a dragon and a tiger carved on it were hanging on his waist. There wasn't a single spot on his clothing that wasn't elegant, as his whole body emanated a noble aura, with a luxurious appearance. He didn't have the kind of soft and tender beauty that Song Hui had. Compared to Song Hui's looks, one third was stern, another third was arrogant. His demeanor was several times more appealing.

His chin was resting on his hands. As he saw Wei Luo pass through the gate, his calm and languid phoenix eyes watched her enter, showing a mischievous laughing expression inside.

A lot of people were sitting in the room, such as Duke Ying Wei Zhangchun and several of Ah Luo's uncles. Surprisingly, Wei Zhangchun had voluntarily occupied a lower seat, yielding the top seat to the youth. It seemed like his identity wasn't simple at all.

Wei Luo quietly cursed on the inside, while she bounced over to Wei Kun, “Daddy...”

Wei Kun caught her small body, laughing as he said: “Ah Luo, quickly greet prince Jing. It was precisely his bodyguard that saved you the other day. Daddy specially invited prince Jing today, so we could properly express our gratitude.”

Wei Luo stared blankly at Zhao Jie.

She had guessed that his status wasn't low, but she hadn't expected it to be this high!

Ah Luo hadn't seen prince Jing's face before, but she had heard rumors about him. In the future, he was going to be a significantly important person. After Emperor Chong Zhen abdicated, he would pass the throne to his (Zhao Jie's) younger brother Zhao Zhang. However, Zhao Zhang would be merely seven years old. Having no authoritative power, he would become the country's first puppet emperor. Zhao Jie would naturally become the ruling regent, all the ministers only acting upon his orders. He was a ruthless person, stubborn and assertive, would seek revenge for the slightest grievance, his schemes deep and profound.

Ah Luo gazed at his right hand's sleeve cuff embroidered in gold patterns. The sleeve slid back, exposing a row of deep tooth marks.

Obviously, during the past few days, those tooth marks hadn't faded one bit, but became more distinct instead.



# Chapter 14

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Oh... Wei Luo felt a little discouraged.

He exposed the tooth marks, was it to deliberately let her see?

His present visit, could it be he'd come to settle the account with her?

Neither seemed impossible, after all, she had bitten him so heavily last time. His bodyguard had almost caught her to bring her back, and had added that they wanted to pull out her teeth. If she hadn't cried, it was very possible that she wouldn't have any incisors right now. If the rumors weren't false, in accordance with Prince Jing's vindictive character, it was highly unlikely that he would let her off.

Lying within Wei Kun's arms, Wei Luo was contemplating. She didn't want to lose her life right after being reborn, nor did she want to provoke this kind of great person. In the end, she wasn't a genuine six year old child. She had many thoughts whirling around in her head, and was much warier than others. Prince Jing's status was respectable. Since she had already offended him, there was no point regretting it belatedly. Apologizing to him now, he wouldn't necessarily accept it. It would be better to seize the opportunity and do a preventive strike, then maybe she could even find a way out. She lifted up her head from Wei Kun's embrace, her bright and sparkling big eyes looking at Zhao Jie, blinking with a naïve appearance: "Thank you, big brother Prince Jing."

Logically speaking, Zhao Jie was a prince, other people were afraid of not being careful enough around him. Since Ah Luo had called him Prince Jing, she shouldn't have added 'big brother'. Calling him 'big brother' implied a rather close relation. However, her small milky voice was naturally sweet and soft. Coupled with her age, it wouldn't make people think too deeply about it, only that her 'big brother' sounded really sweet and pleasant to hear.

Zhao Jie looked away, and subtly bent his lips.

He clearly remembered her rampant and domineering little manner from that day. Leaving aside the fact that she had bitten him, she had sat in her carriage afterwards, saying he wasn't tasty. Not tasty? What did she take him for, the eight treasure duck or roasted chicken sold on the streets of Sheng? Her little manner could really make people feel resentful, so different from her current docile and sensible appearance.

Being in front of her elders, she immediately turned honest?

Zhao Jie didn't speak, neither accepting her gratitude, nor expressing an opinion. He controlled his expression, as he thoughtfully toyed with the ivory folding fan at his waist.

Duke Ying, seeing that the tea cup in his hand was empty, asked for a maidservant to fill up a cup, and let Wei Luo personally carry it over, "These are this year's spring new Emei snow buds (probably type of tea), compared to other tea, the flavor is several times more fragrant and distinct. There's still half a catty left in the residence, if Prince likes it, you are welcome to take it all."

Zhao Jie didn't refuse, glancing at Wei Luo, "This Prince won't be polite then."

After the maidservant poured the good tea, the cup with an inked lid was placed in front of Ah Luo. Ah Luo climbed down from Wei Kun's body, and took the tea. She carefully walked towards Zhao Jie, and raised her arms, saying shyly: "Big brother, have some tea."

Her voice was pleasant, bringing out the youthful purity characteristic to young children. In addition, she dragged out the final sounds of her words, making them sound soft and smooth, so sweet it could give someone a toothache.

The little girl lifted her white and tender small face, her pair of almond eyes especially bright, with long and curling thick

eyelashes. She exceedingly resembled the porcelain dolls from the Western Regions' tribute, Zhao Jie had to acknowledge this little girl was pretty. He wasn't in a hurry to receive the tea, leaning on the ironwood chair's cloud-patterned armrest as he watched her wordlessly.

This little girl was somewhat interesting, lovable in front of people, but ill-natured when they weren't looking. If he hadn't been ruthlessly bitten by her, he would've also been deceived by her pure as snow and cute outward appearance at this moment.

Since he wasn't speaking, Wei Luo once again called out: "Big brother..."

Zhao Jie smiled discreetly, received the cup of tea from her hands, and took a sip. He was just about to speak, when Wei Kun suddenly said from below: "Ah Luo, this person is Prince Jing, not big brother."

In fact, calling him 'big brother' wasn't entirely out of place, Wei Kun was simply too overcautious. If one were to look closely, Wei Luo truly had the right to call Zhao Jie 'big brother'. Zhao Jie's birth mother was Empress Chen, below Empress Chen was Noble Consort Ning, Noble Consort Ning and Count Zhongyi were from the same clan, and Count Zhongyi's residence was Madam Du's maternal home... Those were intricate relations, but even if the connection was complicated, it wasn't impossible to follow.

Having heard the advice, Wei Luo looked at him earnestly. She moved her lips and changed the way she called him: "...Big brother Prince Jing."

The result was, the 'big brother' label still remained.

Others may have thought Ah Luo was being obstinate, but Zhao Jie could see through her little ploy. This was fawning over him. The little miss had a guilty conscience, calling him 'big brother' over and over, in hopes that he would disregard the past enmity and cut her some slack. It was really entertaining. He wasn't fond

of children, but this six year old little miss was rather different. He put down the small tea cup without commenting on the way she'd called him, his index finger tapping on the table's surface, "It was a mere effortless thing, not worth mentioning. Master Wei is speaking too seriously."

The tea had been respected, the thanks had also been expressed, there was nothing else for Wei Luo to do. As the adults were going to speak, they didn't let a small child attend. Duke Ying asked Jin Lu to carry her out. Hugging Jin Lu's neck, she couldn't help but glance at Zhao Jie as they departed. Zhao Jie's deep black eyes were also looking at her. She immediately shrank back, only exposing a pair of limpid eyes, the small appearance both funny, and cute.

The person was already gone, but Zhao Jie's thin lips were still holding in his laughter.

He didn't bother covering the scar on his wrist. Wei Kun noticed the row of distinct purplish red tooth marks, and was inevitably startled. A moment ago, he had assumed his vision had been blurry. Now looking again, those tooth marks were still there. He asked: "Forgive this lowly official for being too talkative, the scar on the Prince's wrist... Was it caused by a bite?"

Zhao Jie propped his chin on his hand, with a lazy 'Yeah', he added: "I was bitten by a little girl."

\*

Coming out of the front courtyard, Wei Luo returned to Pine courtyard directly.

She left Jin Lu's embrace, striding with her short legs, as she ransacked everywhere, looking for something. Not this one, not that one, either. Searching for a long time, she couldn't find it at all.

Jin Lu asked curiously: "What is Miss looking for?"

She used her hand to gesture, bending her head as she thought for quite a while, “When I returned from Huguo Temple, didn’t daddy give me some medicine? It can improve blood circulation to remove the blood clots under the skin and treat a wound.”

When they had left Huguo Temple, Nurse Ye had carried her while running quite a long distance. Unavoidably, she had gotten scratched by several branches. Seeing that, Wei Kun had felt sorry for her for a long time. The next day, he had found that bottle of medicine for her. The medicine’s effect was very good, after applying it, the scabs had fallen off the very next day. She was suddenly looking for it now, Jin Lu was somewhat at a loss: “Didn’t Miss’ injuries get better?”

She shook her head, “It’s not for me, I want to give it to someone.”

Was there another wounded person in the residence?

Could it be for the fifth miss?

It wasn’t actually impossible. Although fifth miss was unruly, she was after all fourth miss’ blood related younger sister. How much enmity could there be between small children? Wei Zheng had sustained injuries today, so Wei Luo giving her that medicine was reasonable. With these thoughts in mind, Jin Lu didn’t hesitate anymore, and went to search through the shelves in the back for a white glazed mosaic porcelain bottle. Handing it to Wei Luo, she said: “Does Miss intend to go to Ginkgo courtyard?”

Wei Luo blinked her eyes, a little perplexed, “Why would I want to go to Ginkgo courtyard?”

Jin Lu gawked, “You took the medicine for wounds, could it be that it’s not for the fifth miss...”

She wrinkled her nose, the small milky voice suddenly unhappy, “It’s definitely not for her. She got injured herself, yet still wanted to blame me. I’m definitely not giving it to her.”

Wei Luo wasn't saying those words without any basis. According to Wei Zheng's temper, right now she would certainly be complaining in Madam Du's bosom. Wei Zheng was not a fool. The fact that Wei Luo had pushed her, even if it hadn't been on purpose, she would still say it was intentional. However, Wei Luo wasn't afraid, since anyone with eyes could see Wei Zheng's unruly behavior. Even if she spoke out, there wouldn't necessarily be many people who'd believe her.

Jin Lu was instantly confused, catching up to ask: "Whom is Miss giving this to?"

Wei Luo didn't respond to her, running on the patio, quickly rushing out through the engraved gate. She was afraid that she'd be one step late and Zhao Jie would have left. She didn't want to offend Zhao Jie. The wound from the bite, she couldn't compensate for, her sincerity would have to suffice.

Fortunately, she had gone promptly, arriving at the front courtyard just in time to catch up with the people, who were currently walking out.

Zhao Jie was in the center, with Duke Ying to his left, following half a step behind him, while the several uncles and Wei Kun were at the rear.

Wei Luo took advantage while they weren't paying attention to her to run over, appearing next to Zhao Jie's legs. Because she was too short, Zhao Jie didn't catch sight of her for some time. Then again, maybe he had seen her, but pretended he hadn't. Her small hand pulled his slender big hand and shook it, attracting his notice at last.

Zhao Jie lowered his eyes. Having just run, the little girl's delicate small face was flushed. Panting slightly, she raised the porcelain bottle in her hands, "Big brother... for you."

## Chapter 15

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Her voice attracted the attention of Wei Kun and Duke Ying, the several adults lowered their heads one after another. Wei Kun spoke surprised: “Ah Luo? Why are you here?”

Wei Luo raised her clear and bright small face, dimples showing as she smiled. Her words were especially sensible: “I’ve come to give big brother Prince Jing this medicine, since big brother Prince Jing’s hand has an injury. Applying the medicine, it should get well right away.”

Finished speaking, she kept her short arms up, but seeing that Zhao Jie didn’t move to accept, she simply gripped his big hand and pried his fingers open, placing the white glaze porcelain bottle inside. “Big brother, apply this every day twice a day, it’ll get better very quickly.”

The little girl’s voice was sticky sweet. Looking down from this angle, her eyelashes were long and thick, hiding that pair of bright and lively big eyes. What expression did that pair of eyes show right now? Sly or sincere? Zhao Jie wondered pensively, then closed his palm and put the bottle in his pouch, the edge of his lips lifting slightly in a smile: “How did you know my hand was injured?”

Wei Luo’s shoulders flinched. She retreated two steps to meet his line of sight. Compared to her, he was much taller. At her current age, her height was much too inferior, looking up at people almost made her neck snap. There wasn’t the slightest hint of shame on her face as she crisply spoke: “When we met at the front courtyard a moment ago, big brother’s sleeve fell back, and Ah Luo saw.”

It actually could be explained that way.

Zhao Jie smiled and reached out to stroke her head, his thumb rubbing her forehead. With a deep tone, he said: “Thank you, you’re considerate.”

His fingers were long and strong. In the sunlight, they seemed to glow like white jade, really like a pair of hands raised in a respectable house. He accidentally parted the bangs on Wei Luo's forehead, only to find a bright red small birthmark between the little girl's eyebrows. Set on her white and tender small face, she appeared even more delicate, charming, and cute. The longer he looked, the more it seemed as if she had walked out of a picture, her lips like cherry, her teeth like pearls. Zhao Jie turned away, and didn't look at her again. Together with Duke Ying, he walked out of the Duke's residence.

Wei Luo stood in the yard pondering. The stuff was received, it should mean she was forgiven, right?

She couldn't see through Zhao Jie's thoughts, only feeling that this person's thoughts were deep, complex and hard to fathom. She searched through the memories related to the previous life's Zhao Jie. He was intelligent and outstanding, noble and handsome, the Retired Emperor's favorite. He was conferred the rank of Prince at twelve years old. His methods were firm and shrewd, very quickly gathering a group reliable aides. After the Retired Emperor passed away, Emperor Chong Zhen, who was unhappy with his (Zhao Jie's) growing ambitions, soon found an excuse to send him off to Wurong to toughen his body, for the duration of exactly three years. Calculating the days, he should have recently come back from Wurong. After returning, he discovered that the structural changes in the Imperial court were very big. Emperor Chong Zhen vigorously supported his younger brother Zhao Zhang, even intending to establish him as Crown Prince...

If memories served right, Zhao Zhang was Noble Consort Ning's son.

Was the Emperor's mind blinded by love, letting go of the perfect from head to toe legitimate son, and insisting on backing up the illegitimate one?

Wei Luo had a few words of silent critique in her mind, the



secrets of the royal family were too many and too complex, she couldn't possibly grasp it all in such a short time. In any case, as far as she could remember, Zhao Jie would later become someone, who would overturn all levels of society.

\*

After sending off Zhao Jie, Wei Kun took Wei Luo along to return to Pine courtyard.

As for Ginkgo courtyard, it was still restless. Madam Du couldn't see Wei Kun, so she thought of a method and got in touch with the third madam Liu. Weeping loudly, she poured out her great sufferings in front of Madam Liu, then asked her to go to Pine courtyard and persuade Wei Kun to bring her back, as she couldn't go on living in this place anymore.

Wei Kun flung his sleeves and remained unmoved: "If she can't go on living there, then let her return to Count Zhongyi's residence!"

Returning to the maternal home divorced and pregnant, how big of a disgrace was that? What would other people think? They would certainly assume Madam Du had had an affair with someone, that the child wasn't Wei Kun's, so Wei Kun couldn't put up with her. At that time, not only would Madam Du's reputation sweep the floor, the rest of the young ladies in Count Zhongyi's residence wouldn't be able to marry.

Madam Liu hadn't expected that even after several days, his anger still had not dissipated one bit. Drinking a mouthful of tea, she advised: "How can fifth brother-in-law say that? Fifth sister-in-law has followed you through thick and thin for five years, in these five years she's helped you manage the home. Even without earning recognition, she has worked hard... Now she's only made one mistake due to confusion. Making the mistake, fine, it's good that you punished her, but refusing to compromise for so long is not the way to go." She glanced at Wei Luo, who was in Wei Kun's

arms, with a veiled expression, "After all, fifth sister-in-law is pregnant, she should take good care of herself, yet she's living in that place, without any people to care for her. If the child is a son, Ah Luo will gain another younger brother, then continuing to live in that place is even more unacceptable..."

Wei Luo didn't like the expression in her eyes, it made her feel uneasy all over. Thus, she burrowed deeper in Wei Kun's embrace and ignored her.

Ah Luo's intuition was really accurate. The past life's Madam Liu didn't like her, and in this life it was still the same. Madam Liu was very nice to Wei Zheng, but towards Ah Luo and Changhong, she wasn't particularly warm. Sometimes there was even a trace of loathing. The cause of that, the Ah Luo from before couldn't have understood, but she could partly see it now...

That day in the reception pavilion, when they had discussed how to handle Madam Du, she had been peeping from outside, and had naturally also seen the conflict between third uncle and father. Afterwards, third uncle had come out and had looked at her with a somewhat distracted expression, as if he was looking at someone else.

Ah Luo wasn't a fool. Third uncle's behavior had been so obvious, she had to be slow-witted not to have guessed correctly.

Wei Kun wasn't saying anything. Wei Luo was worried he would relent, so she muttered a protest within his arms: "I only have Changhong as a younger brother, I don't want any other younger brother."

Her worry wasn't unfounded. Wei Kun's disposition was mild and easily swayed, and the third aunt was silver-tongued. Perhaps Wei Kun would be persuaded in a few words. How was that alright? That would be letting Madam Du off too lightly.

Madam Liu looked at her with a weird smile, "Madam's son is your younger brother, how could Ah Luo say you don't want him?"

Wei Luo didn't look at her. She lowered her head and opened Wei Kun's hand to play with his fingers, going over each and every digit back and forth, mumbling as though she felt wronged, "Ah Luo just doesn't want."

For the most part, the child had gone through a great trauma on her way back from Huguo Temple, to the extent that she couldn't help but shiver at the mere mention of Madam Du. Wei Kun watched her affectionately, his arms enveloping Wei Luo even closer, as he said to Madam Liu: "Third sister-in-law doesn't need to persuade me again. Madam Du has made a mistake and deserves to be punished. As for her child, be it a son or a daughter, wait for her to give birth first, then talk! I won't discuss this matter again, third sister-in-law should go back."

In other words, Madam Du should at the very least reside in Ginkgo courtyard until she gave birth?

Madam Liu's expression wavered. Whether she had more to say or not, she didn't have a good reason to stay behind. She got up to take her leave. She didn't directly return to the third branch house, but turned around midway to head for Ginkgo courtyard, so she could personally deliver Wei Kun's words to Madam Du.

Madam Du listened in a daze. Sitting in an armchair, she couldn't come to her senses for a long time.

Still eight more months to live here, but she couldn't go on staying here for even a day longer! The house was simple and crude, with only two maidservants by her side. Although the servants didn't treat them harshly, it was very different compared to her previous lifestyle after all. It had been a life of luxury before. Dozens of maidservants and old servants all around, whoever saw her would be courteous and respectful, calling her fifth madam. Now she was trapped inside this small courtyard, seeing her own daughter's face was already difficult. How could she accept such a downgrade?

# Chapter 16

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That night, Wei Zheng got a fever and dazedly called out for her mother. Nurse Jin, who was looking after Wei Zheng, was flustered as she raised the alarm at Wei Kun's door, saying that she didn't know how serious it was. Wei Kun draped on a cloak with a dark green bamboo nodes pattern, and sent someone to invite a doctor that very night. After the doctor's examination, he said it was a simple cold, and to cover her with several quilts to warm her up, then he wrote a prescription. Drinking a bowl of medicine, Wei Zheng would be fine on the next day.

After seeing the doctor off, Wei Kun instructed the two maidservants by Wei Zheng's side, Yin Feng and Yin Lou to go and prepare the medicine according to the prescription. He waited for them to bring in the ready medicine, then personally fed it to Wei Zheng before leaving.

The next morning, just as the doctor had said, Wei Zheng's fever retreated. She was also more clear-headed.

Today was the first day for the tutor to give lessons. Originally, she had to go listen to Mr. Xue's lecture, but she actually wrapped herself in the quilt and didn't move a muscle. Yin Lou stood by her bed and called out a few times, but didn't get an answer all along. Yin Lou assumed she wasn't feeling well and that she hadn't recovered from the illness yet, so she ran to Wei Kun to ask for a day off on behalf of Wei Zheng. When he heard that, Wei Kun allowed her to attend the lectures starting tomorrow.

By the time Yin Lou returned, she was still lying motionlessly in bed.

Yin Lou thought she was sleeping, and didn't expect that as she moved closer, she would find her secretly wiping her tears under the quilt. She had cried so broken-heartedly, a big spot of the bedding under her body had been soaked through. Alarmed, Yin

Lou stepped forward to call out gently: “Fifth Miss, you...”

Wei Zheng winced, grabbed the covers and pulled them over her head, wrapping herself even more tightly within, so that no one could see her.

Yin Lou worriedly fussed about at the bedside, wondering what was wrong with her. She rushed to call Nurse Jin and Yin Feng over, to consult them how to deal with the situation. Wei Zheng also didn’t know, but her heart was in great pain and it was difficult to endure that stifling feeling. The little child didn’t know how she should vent her mood, she only had this way of crying.

Wei Zheng had gone to Ginkgo courtyard yesterday, telling Madam Du about her grievances and causing Madam Du to curse at Wei Luo, ‘that little wretch’. Earlier, she had been standing by the pond’s edge, and if Wei Luo hadn’t pushed her, she couldn’t have possibly fallen in. Madam Du wanted to find Wei Kun to demand for an explanation and to scold Wei Luo while at it, yet she couldn’t even catch a glimpse of Wei Kun’s face... At that time she (Wei Zheng) was beside her, helplessly looking on as her mother was embarrassed. That mother who had always been up above, had suddenly fallen down in the mud, continuously asking the servants to let her see father... She watched, feeling a little sad, as she didn’t want to let her mother be so submissive for her sake. She ran over to hold onto Madam Du’s leg, saying: “Don’t look for dad, mother, I don’t want to see dad... It doesn’t hurt anymore...”

What happened after?

Afterwards, Madam Du hugged her and cried for quite a long time. She could sense her mother’s despair and helplessness. Madam Du’s tears flowed down her cheeks and dripped down to her neck, so scalding it was scary. She was still young, and couldn’t really understand her mother’s feelings, but since her mother was crying, she also cried.

Why were they in this state now?

Madam Du spoke close to her ear: "It was Wei Luo, it was Wei Luo and her mother, who harmed us."

The sound of her voice was hypnotic as it entered her ear. She gradually stopped crying, and remembered Madam Du's words deep in her heart. Wei Luo caused their bad condition, Wei Luo made daddy not want mother... Mother said she couldn't go on being willful, she had to study and become smart, just like Wei Luo. Then dad will like her even better, and will let mother return from Ginkgo courtyard.

Wei Zheng had confined herself in bed all day, without eating or speaking, as if she had become a different person.

Jin Lu told Wei Luo about what had happened in Wei Zheng's room. Wei Luo had just come back from the venerable Mr. Xue's study room, and was preparing to have lunch. Listening, she uttered an 'Oh', and didn't give too big of a reaction. Pointing at the shredded chicken with mushrooms gruel on the table, she said: "Big sister Jin Lu, I also want to drink."

From early in the morning, she and Changhong had studied for half the day, so she was already hungry. The venerable Mr. Xue taught them to write characters, being extremely earnest and giving each of them close attention. She and Changhong didn't dare to slack off, as they followed in writing each stroke and each line. Her hand was sore after an entire morning of not putting it down. Having her meal was important, she didn't have any spare time to waste on irrelevant people.

Could Wei Zheng straighten out at long last? Honestly, she was somewhat looking forward to it.

If Wei Zheng kept being so stupid, then even if she won, she wouldn't have a sense of achievement.

It was better like this. Falling from a higher place made more impact, it should be several times more painful.

After several days, Wei Zheng was very peaceful, as if she had calmed down, as if reflecting on life. Thinking so much at her age was a truly difficult thing for her. She listened to the tutors' lessons distractedly, frequently absent-minded, causing the two tutors much dissatisfaction. In comparison, Wei Luo was a lot more obedient and sensible. She attended the lectures seriously. Adding on the little knowledge from her past life, her writing was also neat. The venerable Mr. Xue often praised Wei Luo in front of Wei Kun, saying she was smart and witty, lovable and sensible, very easy to like.

As a father, Wei Kun was naturally proud to hear these words.

Whenever Wei Luo was done with the day's lessons, he would call her over to the study and ask what she had earned today, and whether there was something she couldn't understand. Even Changhong didn't get this treatment, it was enough to notice how much Wei Kun cared for her. Sometimes Wei Luo would be too tired and unwilling to reply, so she would lie on his legs acting like a baby with a sweet and soft voice: "Ah Luo studies during the day, studies in the evening, too tired... Daddy look, my hand is swollen from writing today." As she spoke, she lifted her white and tender little hand in front of Wei Kun to let him see.

Wei Kun was next to the window, which let in the sun. Looking at the fingertips, they really appeared a little red, and he suddenly felt sorry for her. He took them in his hand and massaged them, "Alright, alright, Daddy won't ask. Since Ah Luo is the smartest, Daddy is at ease."

After this, Wei Kun didn't ask about Ah Luo's lesson.

Ever since he spoke those words on that day, Wei Kun was serious about looking after Wei Luo personally. Every day he would come back from the Imperial Academy in a hurry, and the first thing he would ask was 'How is the fourth miss today'. He

found a lot of time to spend with Wei Luo, the little young lady was quite pampered. She didn't have a mother, so Wei Kun acted as both the father, and the mother. He couldn't bear to let her suffer any grievances again. The new dresses and skirts in Wei Luo's room were getting more and more. After changing clothes for the new season, the other misses in the residence all had only four sets, she alone had twelve sets, all paid for with Wei Kun's money. In addition to these, the snacks that the little young lady liked, the accessories, the toys...they weren't few. She had even more compared to other people.

Wei Kun knew Wei Luo liked amusements. Worried that she'd be unable to calm her heart and her restless thoughts, he set up a flower trellis behind Pine courtyard. Inside he planted orchids, chrysanthemums, Chinese peonies, Moutan peonies, and other flowers. He brought Wei Luo to water them every day. Watching them grow daily, he bragged that Ah Luo looked even better than these flowers.

The father and daughter pair's affections deepened with each passing day, so that even Changhong felt jealous: "Dad, don't always look for Ah Luo, Ah Luo won't have time to spend with me."

Wei Kun laughed heartily. Rubbing his head, he laughed at him.

Wei Zheng was silently watching from the side. Compared to before, she was a lot more peaceful, seemingly having grown up overnight. Her brain was active, different from her former clumsiness. For instance now, she ran over to ask with a smile: "Daddy, I like this pot of fine jade flower. Is it alright to gift it to me?"

If it was before, she would've surely kicked the flower pot to turn it over.

The fine jade flower was a white narcissus, each petal clear, sparkling and translucent, the fragrance overwhelmed the senses.



This pot of fine jade flower should have already withered a month ago, but because Ah Luo had raised it well, it grew strong and the flowering was extended by a month. Now that Wei Zheng wanted it, Wei Kun naturally didn't immediately give it to her, saying instead: "This is the flower your fourth elder sister raised, you should ask her. If she agrees, the flower pot will be yours."

Wei Zheng turned her head to face Wei Luo. Her round apple face was all smiles as she asked: "Wei Luo, can you gift this flower pot to me?"

Wei Luo didn't want to gift it, since she had carefully tended to it for a very long time. Wei Zheng was unlikely to raise flowers. What if it got ruined? She slowly voiced an 'Oh', and spoke bluntly: "I can't, I also like this potted flower. I don't want to gift it to you. What to do?"

Wei Zheng pointed at the flower trellis behind her, "You have so many flowers... I only want a flower pot."

Probably because of Wei Zheng's pitiful appearance, Wei Kun's heart softened a little and wanted to persuade Wei Luo to gift this flower pot to her younger sister. Who knew that he had barely opened his mouth to say two words: "Ah Luo..."

Wei Luo tilted her head to ask: "I have so many flowers, because I raised them together with daddy. You're saying you want me to give one now, what's the reason?"

Though her age was small, her desire to monopolize was very strong. Her own things belonged to her only, no one else was allowed to touch them. As her father, Wei Kun was clear about it. Hearing these words, he was naturally embarrassed to urge her again.

She didn't agree, and Wei Zheng definitely didn't have a good reason to demand it. Furthermore, looking at Wei Kun, it appeared that he wouldn't assist in making a decision. He stood to the side pretending to trim the flower branches, while sharpening his ears

to eavesdrop.

Wei Zheng flattened her lips and mumbled: “I’m your younger sister... You can’t give me one potted flower?”

So she knew she was the younger sister now?

Ah Luo blinked her eyes unconvinced, and went over to Wei Kun’s side to pull on his sleeve, “Daddy, Wei Zheng said she was my younger sister, but how come I’ve never heard her call me elder sister?”

Wei Kun coughed and looked at Wei Zheng.

Wei Zheng’s face flushed, this could be considered as shooting herself in the foot. She faltered for a long time, but eventually called out ‘fourth elder sister’.

Wei Luo’s lips blossomed in a smile. Finally showing mercy, she gave her a pot of fringed iris. This flower species wasn’t uncommon, one could find it anywhere. Holding the flower pot, Wei Zheng was extremely annoyed at heart. Unwillingly and with no feeling, she muttered ‘Thank you, big sister’, then turned around to run into her own room.

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After the weather transitioned to summer, it would quickly be time for the Dragon Boat Festival (May 5).

At present, besides gardening and fishing outside, Wei Luo liked to visit Mrs. Han’s room the most. There were many strange and fantastic things in Mrs. Han’s room. According to rumors, they were all secret recipes that she had created in the palace. Bottles and jars were spread all over the dressing table, this one for soft skin, that one to whiten the skin, and more that could turn the body fragrant... Of course, there were also many things intended for a female’s intimate parts, but seeing Ah Luo’s young age, Mrs. Han didn’t explain them all to her.

Once Wei Luo completed the etiquette lessons for the day, she

would come here to fiddle with the fragrant jade dew (Gyokuro) balm, trying this thing, touching that thing. Mrs. Han found it very rare for a child to be interested in these. At first she was amused, but eventually, whenever she created something new, she would pull Wei Luo along each time to try it out. Either keeping a pomander, or using an aromatic liquid to bathe with. These things didn't only contain flower petals, but also had a few medicinal herbs mixed in. They were beneficial for the body, and wouldn't harm a small child using them. However, in the short span of a month, Wei Luo's cheeks became even more tender than they originally were. Though they weren't lacking before, now it seemed as if water would squeeze out if they were pinched, rosy white, lustrous, and moist.

She was still only six years old. Once she grew up, who knew how attractive she would be.

Saying she was a young source of trouble wouldn't be an exaggeration.

A few days before the Dragon Boat Festival, Count Zhongyi's family paid a visit, also bringing Song Hui and Song Ruwei along. Count Zhongyi's successor Song Baiye and his wife Madam Xu were preparing to travel back to Luoyang. Madam Xu's mother had fallen sick, so the married couple had decided to go back to Luoyang for a visit. Due to the long distance, they didn't plan to take Song Hui and Song Ruwei. Furthermore, after the Dragon Boat Festival had passed, it would be time to celebrate the Empress' birthday. Count Zhongyi was already old, and it was inconvenient for him to walk around, thus Song Hui had to represent Count Zhongyi's family and present the birthday greetings to Empress Chen. As a result, they definitely couldn't take Song Hui to go back with them.

Song Baiye had come over this time, in hopes that the two families would visit each other more often. During the time he and Madam Xu weren't present in the capital, Duke Ying's residence

could give more care to Count Zhongyi's residence.

# Chapter 17

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Duke Ying wasn't in the residence, thus only Wei Kun went to the reception pavilion to receive Count Zhongyi's successor and his wife.

Song Baiye and Madam Xu weren't aware of Madam Du's matter yet. Arriving at the reception pavilion, they saw only Wei Kun, but not Madam Du, leading them ask curiously: "How come we didn't see the fifth madam?"

Wei Kun wasn't willing to mention the issue. Furthermore, he didn't want people from Count Zhongyi's residence to meddle in his family's affairs, so he spoke concisely: "She's made a mistake, she's currently reflecting on herself in seclusion."

Hearing that, the two people were considerably startled. Madam Du had made a mistake, this mistake could be big or small, in the end, what kind of mistake was it? No one had told them of this matter, so they naturally weren't clear about the inside story. They had a mind to ask for the details, but seeing Wei Kun's closed off expression, they kept quiet a bit embarrassed. They had come with a request this time, so it wouldn't do to make a disturbance because of Madam Du. Not to mention Madam Du was merely the distantly related second wife. A married daughter was like spilt water, they didn't have a reason to care too much.

Madam Xu considered for a bit, and said a few words of praise for Madam Du as a show of support, "Before Yueying got married, she had the utmost understanding of etiquette..."

Done speaking, she saw that Wei Kun wasn't in the mood to listen, and tactfully changed the topic, bringing up next month's feast in honor of the Empress' birthday. Empress Chen was 35 this year, the legitimate daughter of Huaihua's great general. Coming from a general's family, her moral conduct was righteous. During the time they were recapturing Wurong, she had fought alongside

with the then Crown Prince, Emperor Chong Zhen. Battling the enemies, they were able to defend Daliang's landscape. Empress Chen and Emperor Chong Zhen's mutual affections had developed as they followed each other in life and death on the battlefield, it was deeply moving. It had already turned into a beautiful story in the capital through word of mouth. Empress Chen had given birth to two sons and one daughter. The oldest prince hadn't reached ten before dying an early death. The second prince, Zhao Jie, was 15 this year. There was also the precious princess, who was only seven years old.

Empress Chen had been born in a rich and powerful noble family. What treasures hadn't her pair of eyes seen before? Preparing a gift for her was, therefore, a truly difficult task.

While the adults were speaking, the several children naturally couldn't sit still. Song Hui could still be regarded as sitting properly, but the other kids weren't behaving. Song Ruwei was glancing left and right, Changhong's head was bowed as he played with his coiled nephrite waist ornament, Wei Zheng was absent-mindedly peeling peanuts, as for Wei Luo...Wei Luo?

Song Hui raised his eyes, and saw a small head pop out from behind the ironwood chair that Wei Kun was sitting on. The small head shifted slightly and revealed a pair of round sparkling eyes. With an adorable smiling face, Wei Luo quietly extended a tiny finger and pointed at the door, meaning that she wanted Song Hui to lead her outside.

Song Hui quickly understood, smiled gently, and stood up. After paying respects to Wei Kun and Song Baiye, he said: "Father, fifth Uncle, I want to take Ah Luo and the little sisters along for a turn in the backyard."

Wei Kun was quite satisfied with Song Hui, this future son-in-law, thinking that he was not only intelligent, but also considerably tolerant, and had a sense of propriety. Over time, he would surely turn into a fine young man worth entrusting one's

lifetime to. Having heard what he'd said, he nodded and pulled Wei Luo to come out from behind his back with a smile: "Don't hide, Daddy already saw you."

Wei Luo wasn't feeling the least bit guilty. Sweetly responding with 'Thank you, Daddy', she broke away from him and walked over to Song Hui. Just as she reached him, Song Hui automatically held her little hand, leading her out of the reception pavilion. He tapped her small nose and said with a smile: "You little smartaleck."

Following closely behind, Changhong walked over to them with a wooden expression, and split up Song Hui and Wei Luo's clasped hands. He raised his head to viciously glare at Song Hui, protecting Wei Luo behind his body like a hen protecting her young ones.

He had a very deep prejudice towards Song Hui. If he was asked why, he himself was also not too clear about it. It seemed as if he had formed the habit from childhood. Whenever Song Hui showed up, he would have a sense of crisis, believing that this person had come to snatch Wei Luo away. Growing up, he had probably often heard Wei Kun saying 'Ah Luo is Song Hui's little wife, some day she's going to marry into Count Zhongyi's family', so gradually, he had started to reject Song Hui more and more.

\*

The weather today was good, with clean air and clear skies, a smooth breeze, it was very suitable for a walk around the backyard.

They had barely walked out of the front courtyard, when they met the eldest young master Wei Changyin, who had incidentally also come out.

Wei Changyin was the eldest madam's son, 16 this year. Originally, he was supposed to be a fine young man of style, however, when he was eight years old, he was thrown off a horse because of Prince\* Rui's son, Zhao Jue. The horse's hoofs stamped

on his legs and injured his muscles and bones. Since then, he was unable to stand up and walk again, and could only rely on the wheelchair to move around. Nobody knew how many tears the eldest madam had secretly wiped away that year, as she invited famous doctor after famous doctor to no avail. Fortunately, Wei Changyin was an optimistic and open-minded person, and was thus able to recover his spirits. He had spent these years calmly and with dignity, completely aloof and relaxed, as if the outside world didn't concern him. They obviously lived in the same Duke's residence, yet Wei Luo rarely saw his face. She wasn't that familiar with this eldest brother, either.

Meeting each other now, she politely called out 'big brother', then stood there without talking too much.

Wei Changyin was strikingly handsome, his features greatly resembled the eldest master Wei Min. He was withdrawn and solemn, with straightforward and honest bearings. He had polished his character over the years, becoming more temperate. Although he couldn't walk, his imposing manner as he sat in the wheelchair didn't lose to others, giving people a 'can only watch from a distance, cannot trifle with' impression.

He nodded his head in response and looked at Song Hui, who was next to Wei Luo, the edges of his lips bending in a smile, "Muxi has come." (muxi – osmanthus fragrans tree)

Muxi was Song Hui's childhood name. When Song Hui was born, the courtyard had been full of the sweet scent of osmanthus flowers. In addition, his mother, Madam Xu, was very fond of the sweet osmanthus, so they had chosen that pet name for him. The name was pleasing to the ear, being called like that in his childhood, he also found it pleasant to hear, but now that he had grown up, it seemed a little childish. After Song Hui had turned twelve, it was rare for people to call him by his pet name. Being called this way by Wei Changyin now, he actually wasn't particularly opposed to it, finding it instead somewhat amiable,



“Big brother Wei.”

Supporting himself on the wheelchair, Wei Changyin was, in any case, in no hurry to go, and didn't mind exchanging a few words with him: “Have your mother and your father also come? I haven't seen them for a long time.”

Song Hui replied, “Yes, my mother and father are in the front courtyard.”

Wei Changyin looked pensive, he ought to go over to take a look, but it was inconvenient without the use of his legs. Year after year he led a solitary existence, even if he met them, there was nothing to discuss. Thinking about it, it was better to let it be. Laughing, he said: “Say hello to your parents for me.” Having said that, he didn't continue the small talk. He beckoned for the young child pushing the wheelchair behind him to depart, “I still have some things to do, so I'll take my leave first.”

Song Hui moved back, saying politely: “Big brother Wei, take care.”

The sound of the wheelchair grating on the patio was particularly clear. As it rolled away, Wei Luo was looking at Wei Changyin's back, lost in thought. In the previous life, her close friend, Liang Yurong, had liked big brother Wei Changyin from childhood. No one took it to heart in the beginning, believing it to be a mere child's fancy, that once she grew up, she would become more sensible and would gradually drift apart. But no one could have imagined that after she grew up, this kind of vague goodwill not only didn't vanish, but developed into love between a man and a woman instead, and it only deepened over time. Liang Yurong's parents were fully against this kind of marriage. Not speaking of the large age difference of whole ten years between Wei Changyin and her, those two legs of his were reason enough that they were absolutely unable to entrust her to him.

Too bad that Liang Yurong liked big brother so much, she

ignored all the obstacles. Regardless of how much her family opposed, she never listened.

Though she resisted her family for a very long time, she ultimately couldn't fight against her parents' matchmaking. Marquis Pingyuan chose a good marriage partner for her, only waiting for her to come of age (15), but this kind of marriage never came to be. Because a few days before getting married, she had hung herself at home. By the time people found out, her body was already cold.

This matter was no secret. So long as the past Wei Luo had a mind to ask around, she could find out everything.

She had also heard that Wei Changyin had henceforth shut himself in, and no one ever saw his face again.

His heart must have been in a lot of pain.

Wei Luo was staring at his back in a daze. By the time the person had disappeared out of sight, she was still unable to compose herself. Song Hui gently flicked her forehead and asked with a smile: "What is Ah Luo thinking about? Being so fascinated."

Wei Luo looked at him as she covered her forehead, her dewy eyes appearing confused. Quite a while later, she bent her eyes in a smile, "I was wondering where big brother was going. Eldest aunt said that his legs were no good, and cannot go to places too far away."

Song Hui was also not too clear about this issue. Thinking it over, he said: "He's probably busy." Pausing, he asked Wei Luo, "The Dragon Boat Festival is tomorrow, does Ah Luo want to go out? There will be many interesting things on the main street, big brother Song Hui can take you along to play for the whole day."

Wei Luo responded with a nod, "I want to!"

She had only seen the main street on the second day of her rebirth, but it had basically not been for a stroll. The streets in the

capital city Sheng were the most prosperous, there was an endless stream of customers trading with the merchants. Her personality was very lively, and since there was someone willing to take her out, she was naturally glad.

While Count Zhongyi's family members were taking their leave, Song Hui seized the opportunity to bring up this matter to Wei Kun. Wei Kun hesitated a little, but nevertheless agreed. But since Song Hui's capability was limited, he could only take along Wei Luo alone. Any more and it would be easy to have an accident. As a result, Wei Zheng and Changhong both had to remain home, they weren't allowed to go out tomorrow.

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Everything was set. Apart from Changhong, who had made some noise in the evening in disagreement, things proceeded smoothly. However, while eating breakfast the next morning, Wei Luo wasn't careful and swallowed a whole front tooth inside her belly.

In the first place, this front tooth had been loose for several days, so she didn't dare to touch it, and also ate very cautiously. Who would've known, this morning the kitchen would prepare delicious steamed stuffed buns with a very generous filling. She merely felt the incisor was a little loose, swallowing automatically, the tooth slipped down her throat and into her belly.

She froze. When she managed to respond, she ran up to the gate and opened her mouth gagging for a long time, but nothing came out. Jin Lu was perplexed, thinking that the steamed bun was probably not tasty. She prepared a cup of tea to let her rinse her mouth. Wei Luo raised her small face, furrowing her brows. There was a gap in her teeth, and the air passed through when she spoke: "Big sister Jin Lu, I swallowed a tooth..."

The tooth had to pass through the throat to enter the stomach, it would be disastrous if it blocked the windpipe.

Jin Lu hurriedly put down the teacup and ran to ask for a doctor.

Luckily, after taking a look, the doctor said it was alright, in several days it would safely pass through the intestines.

Wei Luo still thought she had lost face. Eating the tooth along with the steamed bun, when she wasn't even a true six year old child. Her mind couldn't accept it. Since this early morning, she had closed her mouth, refusing to speak.

At around 8am, Song Hui personally came to get her and found out her behavior was a little different from the usual.

How come the little kid wasn't speaking nor laughing today?

Song Hui wasn't riding a horse today. In order to show consideration for Wei Luo, he had taken the carriage instead. As he carried her into the carriage, he asked curiously: "Is Ah Luo unhappy today?"

Wei Luo shook her head, not uttering a word.

He also asked: "Then why aren't you speaking?"

Wei Luo lifted up her glistening black eyes to look into his, covered her mouth and said despondently: "My tooth fell."

After listening, Song Hui not only didn't laugh, but also moved her hand away, looking at her in concern. His younger sister, Song Ruwei, had also recently replaced her teeth. All little children had to go through this, there was nothing to laugh about. If you laughed, she would get angrier, her self-esteem might get hurt, and could even start ignoring you.

Sure enough, with his frank attitude Wei Luo also felt much better. No longer keeping her silence, she was willing to say a few words to him once in a while.

They finally reached the bustling main street, the noisy sounds of the market could be heard from afar. This street was the widest, it could easily fit eight carriages side by side. The carriage of Count Zhongyi's residence kept going until they arrived at the gate of a restaurant. The board in front of the door had 'Zhen Cui Zhai'

inscribed in three big characters. Zhen Cui Zhai was a famous restaurant in the capital, exquisitely decorated, with fine dishes. The shark fin soup and the osmanthus fish bones had reached perfection, making people keep coming back for the taste.

Back in the day, when Emperor Chong Zhen had gone on an inspection tour, he had passed through this place and praised the tasty food. From then on, the restaurant had become well-known, the business had gotten better and better. And today, the majority of their clients were the rich and powerful noble families. If the ordinary families wanted to eat those dishes, they would have to reserve a spot ten days in advance.

Today Song Hui had brought Wei Luo here precisely to let her try the osmanthus fish bones.

He led Wei Luo to go in. Someone from Count Zhongyi's residence had already reserved good seats. After reporting the names to the attendants, a young male servant showed them the way to the private rooms upstairs.

As Song Hui pulled Wei Luo along to go upstairs, he inclined his head to ask her: "Where does Ah Luo want to go and play?"

Wei Luo earnestly considered, "I want to buy a longevity thread bracelet..."

The longevity bracelet guaranteed good health and prevented contagious diseases. She wanted to put the longevity bracelet on Changhong, hoping that his life could be safe and peaceful this time. She never believed in supernatural forces before, but now that she got to live this life, she couldn't help but believe.

She hadn't finished speaking, when she saw a sapphire blue robe lined with sweet flag patterns blocking the front. The opposite party stood on top of the stairway, probably planning to climb down.

She wanted to step aside and give way, but as soon as she raised

her head, she surprisingly met Zhao Jie's pair of eyes, that were as deep as the sea.

Zhao Jie smiled faintly as he looked at her. Her small mouth was hanging open unconsciously, and there wasn't enough time to close it, so she ended up exposing the front tooth gap.

# Chapter 18

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Wei Luo immediately closed her mouth, her eyes opening wide as she watched him rather vigilantly.

She wasn't at home now, nor were the elders beside her, so her attitude towards him changed? Zhao Jie found her very interesting. Obviously a small child, yet different from the average child in all respects. Now that her front tooth had fallen out, she looked more like a little girl instead, both funny and cute.

Song Hui didn't know they were acquainted, and furthermore wasn't aware the person in front of him was Prince Jing. Zhao Jie hadn't returned to the capital for many years. When he had left, Song Hui had still been a child younger than ten years old. Now he had come back to the capital for more than a month, but hadn't made any public appearances, so it was normal for Song Hui not to recognize him.

Out of courtesy, Song Hui stepped to the side to make way, but seeing that the opposite party didn't move, he led Wei Luo towards a private dining room. However, they just took a step, when a guard dressed in cyan clothes easily blocked their path. Song Hui was a little startled, not understanding his intention, "This elder brother, is there something the matter?"

Zhu Geng didn't speak, he was merely following Zhao Jie's orders and nothing more.

Zhao Jie strolled toward Wei Luo, stopping in front of her. He bent down and lifted her chin with a smile in his eyes: "Open your mouth."

Wei Luo kept her mouth closed. He said to open, but if she immediately opened, wouldn't she lose face? Moreover, it looked like he was going to make fun of her. She definitely wouldn't listen to him.

The more she disobeyed, the more he wanted to make her obey. He was in a good mood today and didn't mind wasting some time with her here, so he used his other hand to pinch her little nose. He didn't use much strength, afraid that a pinch would break her. Initially, the little girl could still endure, but her cheeks gradually flushed as she held her breath. Her fine small face filled with indignation, she finally opened her mouth to say: "...Let go!"

Unfortunately, with a missing incisor, the words she spoke weren't too clear, but slightly unnatural. Zhao Jie's smile deepened more and more. Letting go of her tiny nose, he raised her chin to thoroughly look over her front teeth for a long time, and asked: "Will you still bite me now?"

Wei Luo lost face considerably, small children also had their dignity! She tightly pursed her soft pink lips and refused to acknowledge him.

From the side, Song Hui observed the two's familiar manner with each other, and couldn't help but ask: "Excuse me, your excellency is?"

Zhao Jie released Ah Luo at that moment, and straightened up to look at Song Hui. He restrained the laughter in his eyes, and spoke with no arrogance: "Zhao, named Liqing."

Zhao was the country's surname, Liching was namely 'Jing'(peaceful). In the capital Sheng, very few could be called with the word 'Jing'. It was practically needless to ponder too much. Song Hui guessed his identity right away, and hurriedly performed a deep bow, saying: "So it turns out it was the Prince. I am Song Hui of Count Zhongyi's house. Forgive me for being dull, not recognizing the Prince."

His attitude was respectful and prudent, but he was a bit confused all along.

How did Ah Luo come to be acquainted with Prince Jing? In addition, looking at Prince Jing's behavior, he seemed very close to



her. But Ah Luo was usually shut at home, rarely going out. How would she have the opportunity to meet Prince Jing?

Zhao Jie didn't answer his greeting. He lowered his head to shoot a glance at the little girl silently rubbing her nose, his lips raising as he asked: "Did young master Song bring this little sister out to for a meal?"

Song Hui nodded, leading Ah Luo to stand beside him, "Exactly. Today is the Dragon Boat Festival, so I brought her out to sightsee."

Zhao Jie wasn't too clear about the relationship between the houses of Count Zhongyi and Duke Ying, and didn't ask about it. He spoke to Wei Luo, who was hiding behind Song Hui: "The medicine you gave to this Prince last time is finished, do you have any more?"

That medicine's effect was truly not bad. He had only used it a few times, and the purple bruise on his wrist had faded away, leaving behind the distinct tooth marks. The Imperial physician had said the bite was too deep, and estimated that the marks would remain for life. Zhao Jie was angry at first, and wanted to teach this little girl, who didn't know the immensity of heaven and earth, a lesson. Later, when he learned she had bitten him in order to attract his attention, he got a little interested in her. Now, rather than angry, he was more curious, wishing to find out what she was thinking about in that head of hers. He was also baffled with himself. He was clearly the most impatient when dealing with small children, yet he had this much patience for her. If it was someone else, he definitely wouldn't have stopped at the stairs of the restaurant for them.

Wei Luo's eyes glinted, the young milky voice speaking bluntly: "Don't have any!"

Amusement flashed in Zhao Jie's eyes. He wanted to say more, but had no time. If he kept standing there, it would be too

conspicuous. Thus he ended the conversation, and bidding goodbye to Song Hui, stepped down the staircase.

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Zhao Jie sat in the black-roofed carriage of the Jing royal residence, and instructed the coachman to head home. The carriage had traveled midway, when he suddenly called out: "Zhu Geng."

Zhu Geng discretely lifted the black curtain lined with gold embroidery, and walked beside the carriage as he asked: "What commands does the Prince have?"

He was leaning back inside the carriage, the thick curtains keeping the interior dark. Only a little bit of sunshine was let in through the lifted corner, illuminating his slender white hands. His voice was slow, as if he thought over his words as he spoke: "I've been away from the capital for a long time, so there are some things I'm not too clear about. How are the households of Count Zhongyi and Duke Ying connected?"

As his personal bodyguard, Zhu Geng didn't only need his martial arts to be good, but also needed to have some ability to gather information. To Zhao Jie's question, he could answer almost immediately: "The Prince has forgotten, five years ago Count Zhongyi and Duke Ying's families became related through marriage. The niece of Count Zhongyi's Madam got married to Duke Ying's fifth master as his second wife..." He paused, suddenly guessing that wasn't what Zhao Jie wanted to hear about, then added: "The Duke residence's fourth miss and Song Hui are arranged to be married from childhood."

No wonder Song Hui took such care of that little girl, so they were in that kind of relationship. Zhao Jie contemplated casually, that little girl's nature was peevish, she would definitely grow up to be like a hot chili pepper one day. Looking at Song Hui, he seemed to be a mild-tempered person. It was unknown whether he

would be able to withstand her spirit in the future.

Zhu Geng saw that he had no more questions, so he softly dropped the curtain, thinking to himself that he had apparently guessed right.

Inside Zhen Cui Zhai, after the waiter laid down all the dishes saying “customers, take your time”, he went down. Song Hui raised the silver chopsticks, picked up an osmanthus fish bone from the celadon crackle saucer, and placed it in front of Wei Luo, then asked: “Ah Luo, how did you get acquainted with Prince Jing?”

Wei Luo took a bite of the egg yolk, then another bite of the fish bone. One soft, the other crisp, the flavor was salty and delicious. It was no wonder so many people came here to eat this dish, the flavor was indeed pretty good. It was only a pity that she had just swallowed a tooth, and also got mocked by Zhao Jie, now she wasn't in any mood to appreciate the taste. She puffed up her cheeks, saying: “When we went back from burning incense in Huguo Temple, madam wanted to sell me to a slave trader. I asked him to save me, thus we got acquainted.”

She downplayed the story, however Song Hui got a great shock, the raised chopsticks remaining midair for a long time, “What did you say? What madam?”

Wei Luo blinked, seemingly completely unaware that her news had caused someone shock, her young voice saying childishly: “Wei Zheng's mother, my father's wife.”

Her speaking out wasn't without reason. Letting Song Hui know of Madam Du's nature, was the same as letting Count Zhongyi's people know. Madam Du had done such an outrageous thing, if the time came that the Count's people wanted to plead for leniency on her behalf, they still wouldn't be able to open their mouths.

Song Hui's expression was heavy. Just then, he had heard Wei Kun in the entry, when he said Madam Du had made a mistake, but

he didn't expect it was such a huge blunder. Wei Luo was unlikely to tell lies, and adding on the strange atmosphere in the Duke's residence, this matter was certainly real. He was suddenly stumped for words, how could Madam Du be so muddle-headed? What did Ah Luo ever do to her? As a small child who didn't know anything, her eyes would curve when she smiled, especially moving. How did she have the heart to do it?

Song Hui quickly started feeling both guilty and sorry to Wei Luo. Madam Du had come from their family, so their family wasn't able to escape some responsibility. From that point of view, they didn't have the right to say anything. Regardless of how Duke Ying's family decided to punish Madam Du, they didn't have the qualifications to interfere.

It could be said that they had arrived to eat in high spirits, but left disappointed. For Wei Luo, it was because she had met Zhao Jie, while Song Hui was thinking of Madam Du's matter, and didn't know whether he should tell his parents.

After coming out of the restaurant, neither of them was in the mood to continue their stroll. Just as they were about to return to the residence, Wei Luo suddenly remembered something, pulling Song Hui to a stop as she said: "Big brother Song Hui, I still haven't bought a longevity bracelet."

Song Hui broke out of his daze. Raising his lips in a forced smile, he stroked her head and said: "Good, I'll bring Ah Luo to buy a longevity bracelet."

At the Dragon Boat Festival, longevity bracelets were sold everywhere. Holding Song Hui's hand, A Luo pulled him along to one side of the street to have a look. Both sides of the streets were full of peddlers selling all types of trinkets, so dazzling, she couldn't take it all in. Having walked for a while, they eventually stopped in front of a peddler, who had hung five-colored strings all over his stand.

Her body was short, and being in front of the vendor's stand, she simply wasn't able to see any of the display above, so Song Hui held her up by the legs, making it easier for her to sort through the strings. The little girl was very pragmatic, she chose the string that looked the thickest and most durable, and picked it up saying: "I want this one!"

Smiling, Song Hui completed the transaction, and turned his head to indicate for the bodyguard to pay. He was about to tie the bracelet around her wrist for her, not expecting her to shake her head in refusal: "It's not for me to wear, it's for Changhong."

Song Hui was stunned, as he believed she was buying it for herself. So young, yet she was thinking of her younger brother, it was clear she was particularly thoughtful. Recalling how such a sensible little girl had almost gotten sold, his heart couldn't help but squeeze painfully, "Do you know what this is used for?"

Ah Luo nodded with a smile, "Nurse said the longevity bracelet lets a person live long."

It was actually a very practical statement.

Song Hui was amused by her, his overcast mood from before had improved to some extent. He carried her as he walked towards the carriage, "Our Ah Luo is truly sensible."

Wei Luo was hugging his neck with a smile on her small face, but she didn't think so in her mind. It wasn't that she was sensible. She remembered the previous life Changhong's bitter experiences. The longevity bracelet might not necessarily be able to ensure his long life, she was merely seeking a little peace of mind. In any case, she wanted Changhong to grow up healthy and steady in this life.

The two persons' clothes were luxurious, their appearance uncommon. A youth in an indigo robe with golden persimmon stem brocade that underlined his tall and straight physique, a splendid boy with many prospects; in his embrace a little lady whose looks were even more exquisite, with red lips and white

teeth, one look was enough to tell she wasn't a child from an ordinary household. Especially the silver longevity locket with blue jewels around her neck dazzled people's eyes with its brilliance. One big and one small figure were walking on the street, attracting many gazes.

A woman, carrying a wicker basket over her hand, made a move, taking out a pink silk flower as she stepped forward to ask: "Young lady, you're so pretty, this silk flower suits you the most, why don't you ask your big brother to buy one?"

Song Hui's arms protected Wei Luo's body from being touched. Following the voice, Wei Luo took a look. When she saw that woman's face, the happy expression in her eyes froze immediately, turning ice-cold.

The woman was wearing apricot yellow garments, the attire was plain, a green worm silver hairpin in her cloud bun hairstyle. Her looks were ordinary, lips slightly thick, above the corner of her mouth was a black mole. It was exactly this black mole that Wei Luo deeply remembered. In both lifetimes, she wouldn't be able to forget it.

In her previous life, Wei Luo had washed down the river, and into a village named Longshou village. Longshou village was almost 10 li (5 km) away from the capital Sheng, its position remote, life there was also comparatively poorer. She was adopted by a family of two. The husband was called Bai Yang, and the wife Lin Huilian. She was like a biological daughter to them, they never treated her ill, meeting such people was already very rare in such an impoverished village. Wei Luo initially thought herself fortunate to have this pair of kindhearted foster parents. Rather than going back to the Duke's residence to be mistreated by her stepmother, it was better to stay here as their daughter.

But the truth was different.

This couple had once had a son many years ago. The son had

drowned and perished in the same river, that she had originally floated down from. They adopted her not to raise her as a daughter, but as a daughter-in-law. They wanted to marry her to him after she grew up, so their son had someone to take care of him in the underworld. When she first learned of this matter, Wei Luo had been shocked for a long time, not knowing what to do. They saved her and brought her up, now that they mentioned this kind of request, should she comply?

At that time, she was already 14, the prettiest young woman in Longshou village. There were many young lads who wanted to take her as a wife, and were discussing marriage offers with the Bai household. They weren't looking for a good match, were they really going to make her into a ghost bride for their son?

But the Bai Yang couple pleaded, saying they were childless, and didn't have the heart to let their son be alone in the netherworld. Based on their mutual affection for so many years, they asked her to agree to this marriage. After she got married, they would treat her the same way as before, they absolutely wouldn't be unfair to her, and would consider her as their own child.

Wei Luo considered this for three days, and still agreed in the end.

That was what she owed them for their kindness.

The wedding was decided to take place on her 15th birthday, when she reached marriageable age. Who knew how many people in the village wrung their hands in regret for this reason, saying some things behind her back, but never letting her hear. On the day she got married, she wore the red bridal clothes, believing she would have to perform the wedding ritual in front of the memorial tablet, but didn't expect the Bai Ying husband and wife to bring her to the graveyard halfway up the mountain behind the village, wanting her to kowtow to a coffin. The person was dead for many years already, the corpse had rotted long ago, only a pile of bones remained. She was suppressing her fear in order to complete the

courtesies, while her legs felt weak at the knees. Just when she was ready to return home, that pair of husband and wife went as far as to push her into the coffin, intending to bury her alive with their son.

Wei Luo was scared out of her wits. It turned out all their nice words were false, adopting her was for this purpose from the beginning. So when the villagers wanted to speak but hesitated, it was because of this.

She didn't know where she got the strength at that time, she struggled free, and fled down the mountain, taking advantage of the night's darkness. She ran away from this village called Longshou.

She couldn't stay at this place anymore. What she had to pay back was all paid back, the kindness was also repaid. She didn't owe them anything. She wanted to return to the capital and the Duke's residence to meet her relatives, but didn't anticipate that neither place could serve as her shelter. No matter where she went, it was a dead end.

The woman in front of her now, was precisely Bai Yang's wife, Lin Huilian. Her previous life's foster mother.



# Chapter 19

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Lin Huilian would sell her own handmade silk flowers in the capital each month to support the family. As Bai Yang's legs weren't good, he wasn't suitable for the heavy farm work, so the whole family could only rely on the money from her selling the silk flowers to live. The past life's Wei Luo felt that while this lifestyle may be hard, it was actually very joyful. She also learned how to make silk flowers from Lin Huilian, making them even more appealing than hers. But she'd never imagined things would turn out like that in the end.

Now, seeing that face again, she recalled the feelings of disappointment from the past life. Looking at Lin Huilian, the first thought in her mind wasn't about them being good to her, but the scene of that woman and Bai Yang pushing her into the coffin. The black mole at the corner of her mouth, that she had looked at for ten years, felt so unfamiliar right now.

Wei Luo received the pink silk flower that she was handed. Lost in thought, she held it for a long time without relinquishing her grip. Mrs. Lin and Song Hui both thought she liked it, Song Hui was even about to call for an aide to pay the money, but she unexpectedly trembled as if she was cold, and threw the silk flower at Mrs. Lin. Closely hugging Song Hui's neck, she said, "Don't want it! Big brother Song Hui, this flower smells very weird."

Wei Luo's words weren't idle talk, falsely accusing Lin Huilian, but she had solid evidence.

The people who went to the capital to sell their silk flowers were many, but her craftsmanship wasn't good, the flowers she made were less attractive than other people's, so the business was naturally worse than theirs. In order to earn a living, she had no choice but to think of other means. She soaked vanilla in the silk flowers. The scent of vanilla was unique, and many young ladies became fond of it. But this scent made people easily addicted.

Henceforth becoming dependent on it, if they didn't get to smell it one day, they would feel uncomfortable all over.

Such an insidious business, the past Wei Luo had only found out about it when she was 15.

Mrs. Lin never let her wear this kind of silk flower, she only sold them to the rich families' Misses from distant villages and the capital. Because she went to remote places, she hadn't been discovered yet.

At Wei Luo's current words, Mrs. Lin's complexion turned pale. She didn't know whether this little lady had found out anything wrong, and was furthermore afraid that other people may figure something out. If others thought there was a problem, she wouldn't be able to come to the capital to do business anymore. She frantically picked up the silk flower from the ground, and turned around to leave, no longer trying to sell to Wei Luo.

Wei Luo watched her departing figure with a taut face, showing a dark and gloomy appearance.

Song Hui was amused by her solemn expression. Setting her down on the carriage, he pinched her tender face and asked: "How strange was the scent of that flower after all? It seemed to offend little sister Ah Luo's nostrils."

Wei Luo didn't like people pinching her face, just as much as she didn't like others seeing the tooth gap in her mouth. She puffed up her cheeks, pushing his hand away, "Hurts! Big brother Song Hui, don't pinch me!"

The little girl's skin was getting more and more delicate, moist, white and tender, making people unable to resist a touch. Song Hui let her go to take a look, and the places that were pinched by him really had a trace of red. He obviously hadn't put any strength into it, so strange. Song Hui felt truly bad for her as he used his hands to rub gently. After rubbing for a little while, he couldn't help laughing: "It really is fragile."

Wei Luo didn't answer, her brain was still occupied with her earlier encounter with Lin Huilian.

It shouldn't have been long since they'd buried their son at the current date, her and Bai Yang were probably in the middle of mourning. If it wasn't out of fear that the family would starve, Lin Huilian wouldn't have come to the capital to sell silk flowers. But Wei Luo wasn't concerned about this point, she was concerned whether they would adopt another little girl during their lifetime. Adopting someone, would they prepare a ghost marriage for their son with her?

Burying people alive wasn't a trivial matter. If it was reported to the authorities, it was enough to convict them.

That pair of husband and wife weren't only insane, but also lawless.

Moreover, what made Wei Luo bitterly disappointed was that the people in Longshou village were evidently all aware of their plans, yet not a single person warned her.

Wasn't that considered as a tacit approval? Was her life of so little value in their eyes?

She was pursing her lips wordlessly. Song Hui had called her many times without getting an answer, while she looked forlorn and lost in thought. Thinking she was feeling ill, he got anxious, and was about to pinch her small palms: "Ah Luo!"

She finally returned to her senses. Raising her pair of dewy eyes, she uttered a soft 'ah'. She noticed he had broken out in sweat, and held up a sleeve to wipe it away, "What is it big brother Song Hui? There's sweat on your forehead."

The pair of eyes had cleared up, glittery and spirited, the gloomy expression from a moment ago was gone.

Song Hui let out a breath, gripping her small hand as he asked: "What were you thinking about just now? I called you so many

times but you didn't answer."

Wei Luo tilted her head, dragging the sound of her words and acting spoiled as she said: "I was sleepy just now... Big brother Song Hui, when are we going back home?"

So it turned out her eyes had been blurry from being tired. Song Hui found it a little ridiculous, getting frightened all by himself. There was nothing wrong with Ah Luo. He made her lie down on the wide red-lacquered seat with spiral decorations, and covered her with a blanket embroidered with gold and silver flowers. He said indulgently: "Ah Luo can rest awhile for now, when you open your eyes again, we'll be home."

She nodded and obediently closed her eyes, turning her back to the wall.

The little kid was actually very tired, and it didn't take long for her breath to even out, as she fell asleep.

\*

Back in Duke Ying's residence, Song Hui carefully passed Wei Luo to the Nurse.

Having suddenly traded one embrace for another, she didn't feel secure and whined in protest. Patting her back, the Nurse coaxed her into quickly going back to sleep.

The Nurse carried Wei Luo, entering the residence, while Song Hui stood outside the gate for a long time. Once he wasn't able to see their figures any longer, he turned around to climb into the carriage.

The carriage quickly returned to Count Zhongyi's residence. Song Baiye and Madam Xu were out and grandfather, Count Zhongyi, was old. Managing this big residence's household affairs depended on Song Hui alone. He recalled the words Wei Luo had said today in Zhen Cui Zhai. Contemplating over them for a while, he still decided to make someone investigate about that day's

events.

Although the guards at Count Zhongyi's residence weren't as well-trained as Duke Ying's elites, if they wanted to investigate something, it wasn't difficult for them.

Not a long time later, one person came back to report: "Young master, it's all true."

Song Hui tightly gripped a small ceramic teacup in his hand, and said in a hoarse voice: "Give me the details."

The guard retold the whole story of that day, including Madam Du coming in contact with the slave traders; Nurse Jin shouldering the blame for her and getting beaten to death by the Duke residence's people; as well as the discovery of Madam Du's pregnancy, and her present confinement in a small courtyard... It seemed Wei Luo's words were all true, Madam Du had seriously wanted to sell her.

That was simply unforgivable.

Done listening, Song Hui was silent for a long time. Without any warning, he flung the teacup far away.

The small teacup smashed into pieces as it fell on the ground. The guard below was petrified, not daring to open his mouth again.

A while later, he stood up, saying: "Don't let my parents know of this matter yet. When they come back from Luoyang, I'll tell them personally."

The guard complied, and seeing that he had no more orders, tactfully withdrew from the room.

Song Hui spent a lot of time sitting in the main hall, without calling for anyone to attend to him. The maids didn't dare act on their own initiative either.

The young master's disposition was the gentlest, he almost never

lost his temper. Today he got angry enough to smash a teacup, it could be clearly seen his anger wasn't small. They didn't know what had occurred inside, trying to guess the reason secretly, but they weren't able to come up with the correct answer all along. By the time the sun set in the west, with the clouds turning an impressive rosy color, no light was lit in the main room, and it was thoroughly dark inside. Only then did he slowly walk out.

\*

Duke Ying's residence.

Wei Luo slept until the next morning. As soon as she opened her eyes, she started looking for the longevity bracelet she had bought yesterday. With great difficulty, she found it under the flower decorated pillow. She didn't even bother putting on her shoes, when she set out to find Changhong.

Her black hair was spread over her back, accentuating her delicate and nimble form. Beneath a green muslin skirt, a pair of bare white feet stepped on the floor, but she didn't dislike the cold. No one would be able to block her path if she ran. Fortunately, Wei Kun came out around then. He crouched by the door and brought her into his embrace. Hugging her as he stood up, he asked: "Where does Ah Luo want to go in such a hurry?"

Holding the longevity bracelet, Ah Luo twisted her body, "Daddy, bring me to Changhong quickly, I have something to give him."

Wei Kun raised his eyebrows curiously, "What thing?"

She had no choice but to take out the longevity bracelet. She didn't expect that after Wei Kun saw it, he would praise her greatly for being considerate and knowing how to take care of her younger brother as a proper elder sister.

The weather in the early morning was chilly. Walking barefoot, it was easy to catch a cold. Wei Kun personally put red satin shoes with stitched patterns on her feet. Once she was done dressing and

washing up, he led her to the central building to find Changhong. Breakfast dishes were already arranged on the table in the central building. Changhong was seated behind the red-lacquered cedar round table, waiting for them with an upright posture.

Wei Luo crossed over the threshold, walking up to him impatiently. All smiles, she said: "Give me your hand, I'll give you something good."

Changhong offered his hand confused. He only saw her putting on a show of taking out a five-colored string from behind her, then lowering her eyes to carefully tie it around his wrist, making a knot at the end, "This is called a longevity bracelet. Nurse said that putting it on, all your life you'll be safe and sound."

She didn't like how plain the string was at first, so she had made Jin Lu add an east sea pearl to it. The pearl was glossy, smooth and round. Though it wasn't big, it was very valuable. This pearl had been given to Ah Luo as a birthday gift by Duke Ying, and she had stored it in a small box straight away. She couldn't bear to wear it, only occasionally taking it out to have a look. This time she was calmly giving it to Changhong, it was obvious that she wasn't a stingy person.

As Changhong heard her say the last few words, he wanted to take the bracelet off. He spoke solemnly: "I don't want it... You wear it, and be safe."

Wei Luo saw he seriously wanted to take it off, and immediately glared at him with round eyes, pursing her lips to threaten: "You can't. If you dare take it off, I'll get angry."

He froze at once.

This trick never failed. Changhong was most afraid of her anger, so whenever she threatened him like that, he would immediately turn obedient and do what he was told.

A short while later, a neatly dressed Wei Zheng walked in and sat

opposite of Wei Luo. She was wearing a turquoise muslin top with weaving indigo peony patterns, her hair styled in two buns. After greeting Wei Kun, she started eating her meal. While she ate, she never spoke a word to them, but concentrated on finishing her food so she could leave. She wasn't able to get along with Wei Luo and Changhong, and the two of them also didn't pay her any attention. The atmosphere was unexpectedly peaceful that way.

Done with breakfast, Wei Kun put down his chopsticks and spoke to the children: "The day after tomorrow is the birthday banquet for the Empress, and the palace has invited our Duke house to go. The three of you should behave later, don't get in any trouble."

Wei Luo gulped a mouthful of the shredded chicken congee with mushrooms. Ever since her front tooth fell, she didn't dare eat steamed buns, afraid that the other incisor may also wind up in her belly. Having heard everything, she lowered her head slowly, and couldn't help letting her mind wander. In her previous life, she'd never had the chance to visit the palace, and naturally hadn't seen Empress Chen. She'd heard that Empress Chen possessed a noble aura, with an extraordinary bearing, dignified and magnanimous. She had stood on the battlefield side by side with Emperor Chong Zhen. She was so remarkable, but why did the Emperor favor Noble Consort Ning?

Wei Luo propped her chin up, feeling curious.

She wanted to meet this female general of Daliang, and take a look at what kind of person she was.

However, recalling that the Empress was Zhao Jie's mother, her enthusiasm waned a little.

She still hadn't forgotten that he'd mocked her, alright!

She didn't believe he'd never had his front tooth fall out, yet he still wanted to look at other people's mouths. Was it that funny? Wei Luo pouted, thinking he was really tactless.



## Chapter 20

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Empress Chen celebrated her birthday on this day, the 8th of May.

In recent years, the relationship between the Empress and the Emperor was getting increasingly worse, coming to a deadlock. Everyone, without exception, was aware of the situation. Even the banquet this time couldn't compare to the splendor of the past. The birthday banquet was set up in Wild Goose house and Riverside house, beside the great lake in the Imperial palace. These two buildings were situated at the foot of a hill and beside a stream. They were richly decorated. Dazzling glazed tiles on a red roof, raised eaves, and two gaping hornless dragon sculptures lying on both ends at the very top. Looking from afar, the view was like a fairyland from a drawing, out of reach. Coming closer, one was able to see the auspicious colorful carvings of a dragon and phoenix on the two buildings, the dragon on top, and the phoenix below, twisting and turning, mounting the clouds and riding the mist.

The two houses separately received the Imperial court's ministers and officials. Wei Kun personally saw off the several children to Wild Goose house, handing them over uneasily to the fourth madam Qin: "I'll trouble you to watch over these few children, fourth sister-in-law... If you can't handle them, you can also request for a servant to look after them."

Madam Qin already had three sons, adding in Wei Luo, Wei Zheng, and Wei Changhong, it was really too much of a stretch. To begin with, Madam Du would have normally been brought to attend this sort of occasion. However, she had just committed a huge blunder. No one could convince Wei Kun to take her along, thus she remained home. Wei Zheng was without her mother, and she was still young. Arriving at the Imperial palace, she got timid, and followed blindly behind Wei Kun. She even spoke less than usual.

Madam Qin took over the group of children, and teased with a smile: "What is fifth brother-in-law saying? This isn't such a difficult thing, you can rest assured and just leave them to me."

Duke Ying's family had arrived early. At this moment, there was still nobody in front of the two buildings except for the eunuchs and servant girls bustling about, bringing fruits and pastries inside. Wei Kun saw that Madam Qin had brought three servants along, and the three children each had their Nurse with them. He was confident it was unlikely for some major event to happen, thus he nodded his head and turned around to head to the Riverside house.

Watching Wei Kun walk away, Madam Qin sighed softly.

Madam Du wasn't a good match for him. Though he was surrounded by children for so many years, his heart was missing one person, letting him feel lonely the whole time. If Jiang Miaolan was still around, Madam Du wouldn't stand a chance.

She led the children into the building while she was thinking. It looked really lively around her. With six children in total, each one speaking could drown out a person's voice. The eldest madam watched from the side, and asked with a smile: "Will you manage to take care of them all? If not, why don't you give Ah Luo and Changhong to me?"

The eldest madam only had a son, the eldest young master Wei Changyin. She didn't have a daughter, so she was very fond of the residence's young ladies.

Madam Qin pursed her lips in a smile, tactfully declining: "It's usually me looking after Ah Luo and Changhong. Most likely, there won't be any issues now."

Her voice barely fell, when Wei Zheng broke free from Madam Qin's hand and ran to the third madam Liu, "I want third aunt!"

Madam Liu was suddenly pulled by her. Surprised, she turned

around to take a look, and quickly understanding what happened, smiled at Madam Qin, then brought Wei Zheng upstairs. Madam Liu had always been close to Madam Du, and she was also more affectionate with Wei Zheng. Thus, Wei Zheng would rather be close to third aunt than fourth aunt.

Madam Qin was started slightly, but soon smiled rather helplessly. She used her freed hand to hold onto Changhong, softly saying: "Let's also go upstairs."

Wild Goose house had altogether three floors. The first floor was an area for people to enjoy the sights. Upright screen murals were set up all around. At each of the four corners stood an enamel vase with flowers and birds painted on. An eight treasure lustrous couch was placed on the east side, scarlet pillows embroidered with flowers on top of it. Once Empress Chen arrived, she would sit precisely there. On the second and the third floors, several small red lacquered tables with conch ornaments were arranged in the middle. Melon seeds, peanuts, peaches and other fruits were put on these tables as snacks.

Wei Luo had just walked in following behind Madam Qin, when she caught sight of a seated little girl in a purple half sleeve silk vest over an embroidered yellow dress, focused on peeling peanuts. She peeled the shells of the peanuts in front of her, yet she didn't eat a single one, neatly arranging the peeled red skins into a goose shape. She was also around six or seven years old, with round cheeks and almond eyes. When she laughed, her cheeks would show two dimples.

Wei Luo heard the maidservant at the girl's side calling her "second Miss", and just as she intended to try and figure out which family's second miss it was, she was called over by Liang Yurong, who stood in front of her.

Liang Yurong was wearing a green short jacket weaved with gold over a white silk skirt, and her hair was styled in a round bun. She looked exquisite. The delicate manner of dress made her appear

even more polished, bright and modest. She partly sat on a short couch, supporting herself on the carved rosewood armrest as she looked outside and pointed full of enthusiasm, “Look, Ah Luo, you can see the view over there.”

Wei Luo accompanied her and walked over to sit down by her side. They could really see inside of the opposite side’s Riverside house. Riverside house didn’t have blue curtains covering everywhere like them, but was rather out in the open. The two buildings weren’t far from each other, it was even possible to clearly see the actions and appearances of the people inside. Liang Yurong was quite at leisure, so she started looking for any familiar people – this one was her daddy, that one was her big brother, even found some uncle she knew... She suddenly pointed at a spot and asked: “Ah Luo, isn’t that your eldest brother?”

Wei Luo followed the direction her finger was pointing at, and really seemed to see her eldest brother’s figure by the lakeside. Wei Changyin was sitting in his wheelchair far in the distance, his expression couldn’t be seen clearly. In front of him was standing a youth dressed in large sleeved clothes. The youth had his back to them, with his arms crossed behind him, and they couldn’t see who he was.

Wei Luo nodded and was just about to speak, when she suddenly paused.

This time’s Liang Yurong had barely seen her eldest brother a few times, and only held some sympathy towards him. Wei Luo recalled the deadly tragic conclusion of their story from her previous life, and leaned on her cheek as she thought. Was it possible to prevent their story from ever starting in this life? The previous life’s Liang Yurong had tried so hard, but it was all useless. Rather than suffering again this time, it was better to cut off the source of these feelings from the very beginning.

She pulled Liang Yurong back, and grabbed some peanuts from the plum colored plate on the table, handing them over, “It’s so

far, I can't see clearly... Let's stop watching. Just eat peanuts."

Liang Yurong accepted the peanuts, and barely peeled one to eat, when she sensed someone shooting them a not too friendly look from across. She raised her head to look, and found a small girl staring at her from the other end of the table. She was confused, so she blinked her eyes and generously offered the well-peeled peanut, "Do you also want to eat?"

Who could have imagined, the opposite party didn't want to eat, rather the "Picture of a Wild Goose in Flight" was not yet finished. A bunch of peanuts had been seized by Wei Luo from the plate, thus there weren't enough now. She pushed the pile of peanuts before her in a huff, and the drawing arrangement she had spent half a day on instantly disappeared without a trace. Pouting, she said: "I won't draw, won't draw!"

It turned out, this little miss was the second miss from Duke Zhen's house, named Gao Qingyang. She was close in age to Wei Luo and Liang Yurong, as she was also six years old. Duke Zhen's wife was Empress Chen's younger sister. She didn't have any sons, only two daughters. However, because Duke Zhen's wife was related to Empress Chen through her maternal line, her position couldn't be threatened. In these many years, Duke Zhen only accepted a single concubine, and even if the concubine gave birth to a son, the child would be fostered under her own name. Duke Zhen's wife doted on her two daughters. Besides the little one, there was also the older daughter named Gao Danyang. Gao Danyang was 14 this year, rumored to be incomparably charming, a first-class beauty.

Right now, Gao Qingyang was angry. Liang Yurong wasn't fawning over her like others, instead she was curiously asking her: "Do you still want these peanuts?"

She humphed, "Don't want."

Seeing Liang Yurong wrapping a bunch of peanuts in a silk

handkerchief, Gao Qingyang thought she wanted to eat them. Just about to say a few mocking words, Liang Yurong opened her mouth to speak: "Ah Luo, let's go feed kittens in the back. When I came here a moment ago, I saw there were many kittens, very pretty, behind this building."

Anyway, there was nothing to do upstairs, and they didn't know when Empress Chen would arrive. Wei Luo nodded her assent and asked the standing nearby Madam Qin, "Fourth aunt, can I go down to play awhile?"

Madam Qin was speaking with some people from Marquis Dingling's residence. When she heard the question she hesitated, but then she saw the little girl's hopeful face. Moreover, others also had their children go downstairs, so she ended up agreeing. She still didn't feel assured, so she let two older servants go along with them, and urged Wei Luo: "Don't go far, you must come back soon."

Two dimples appeared as Wei Luo smiled and sounded a crisp 'okay'.

Left behind, Gao Qingyang couldn't say a thing, and choked instead, as she angrily stared at them departing. She was just about to grab the peanuts set on the table and throw them, when a person suddenly stopped in front of her. Changhong's small face looked strict. A pair of pitch-black eyes below long eyelashes were looking at her, as he blocked her hand saying: "You can't."

Gao Qingyang hadn't seen him before, and asked automatically: "Can't what?"

He didn't speak, as he truly was a person of few words. However, he very earnestly pried her hand open, took the peanuts she held, and dropped them onto the table. After that, without even glancing at her, he turned around to follow after Wei Luo down the stairs.

Gao Qingyang was watching him walk away, when her reaction

finally caught up. Fine, they're all just a bunch of kids!

\*

Wei Luo followed Liang Yurong downstairs and along a cobblestone lane. Not far in the distance, there really were two or three snow white kittens under the dark red scarlet banana flowers.

The kittens were very small, evidently only a few months old. Lying on top of the fresh green grass, they evoked some tender feelings. There weren't any palace maids around, who knew whether anyone was taking care of these cats. Liang Yurong crouched in front of them and couldn't help but reach out to pet them, "Ah Luo, these cats are so pretty, their fur is completely white. Quickly come look."

Wei Luo wasn't that fond of furry little things. She had only come out, because staying behind in the house would be too boring. Hearing Liang Yurong speak, she hesitated for a long time, then slowly approached to crouch in front of the kittens. The three kittens were really very pretty, the eyes were sapphire blue, the whole body was snow white. Seemingly aware that she was looking at them, they were eagerly gazing back at her.

Those eyes were too innocent. Looking at them for a long time could make a person captivated.

It was the first time Wei Luo got interested in a kitten. She reached out a hand wanting to touch its ears, but it unexpectedly extended its claws and pounced on her arm. Wei Luo had a scare and immediately jumped up, subconsciously wishing to throw off that cat. But knowing those cats showed up in the palace, and were furthermore such a rare breed, it was certain that there was someone raising them, whether it was an Imperial concubine, or a princess. If the cat got injured by getting dropped, it would likely lead to trouble. With no better options, her body stiffened up as she tried to put the cat back to its original place, but the kitten

stuck to her. Closely clinging on and not letting go, and even stretching its tongue to take a lick of the back of her hand.

...She was not tasty!

Wei Luo called out to Liang Yurong: “Help me take it off...”

Her whole arm was covered in goosebumps. She really wasn't fond of small furry animals, after all.

Seeing this, Liang Yurong howled with laughter. She not only didn't help, but actually got comfortable to watch the show. Wei Luo thought of asking Changhong for help, but soon after he had come out, Changhong had been called over by some people around Wei Kun. She couldn't do anything about it, and was licked by this small kitten again. This was what isolated and helpless felt like!

Liang Yurong noticed Wei Luo's eyes reddening slightly, and restrained her laughter as she got ready to help her. Right as she was about to move, she heard a clear and sonorous female voice coming from the front: “Who are you two? Why are you here?”

Liang Yurong raised her head, only to see a young lady dressed in a cherry colored gilded dress standing not too far behind the scarlet banana flowers. She was watching the white kitten on Wei Luo's arm with wrinkled brows. She was about 13 or 14 years old, with black hair and snowy skin, clear eyes and white teeth, both charming and delicate, stirringly beautiful.

“We...” Thinking she was the cat's owner, the dazed Liang Yurong was about to answer, when that girl walked up to Wei Luo and reached out to take the cat off her arm.

The girl said: “This cat isn't yours to touch.”

She turned to look behind and spoke discontentedly: “Cousin Jing, how can you raise the cats in this kind of place? I gave them to you, don't you care at least a little about them?”

Ten steps behind her was Zhao Jie, wearing a weaved with gold azure robe with clouds pattern brocade, his stature tall and



straight. He remained unmoved by her words, as his vision actually fell on the frowning little face of Wei Luo, who stood beside her.

# Chapter 21

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Zhao Jie took a few steps towards Wei Luo, then leaned over to grasp her soft little hand. Rubbing the back of her hand with his big thumb, he asked: “Let this prince take a look, were you scratched?”

The back of the little girl’s hand was smooth, without even a trace of a scar, only two shiny wet spots.

It seemed like the kitten had liked her very much and wanted to get close to her. Unfortunately, it was too enthusiastic, scared the little girl, and got tragically snubbed. Zhao Jie recalled the scene he’d witnessed a moment ago and couldn’t help but burst out in laughter. She had stiffened her body, not daring to move, while trying to get the cat off her arm. Her small face tensed up, as if she was facing her greatest enemy. He had thought she wasn’t afraid of anything under the sky, yet it turned out she had a fear of cats?

Wei Luo drew back her hand. Pursing her lips, she shook her head.

Zhao Jie smiled as he brought up a finger to touch Wei Luo’s reddened eyes, then asked in a pleasant voice: “Why are you crying?”

Wei Luo wasn’t crying. Her eyes would easily redden if she was anxious, but that was still far from crying. She didn’t know why Zhao Jie would appear here, nor was she interested to know. Getting toyed with by that cat, she wasn’t in the best of moods, and only wanted to go back to Wild Goose house, “I haven’t cried.”

She had barely finished speaking, when she noticed Zhao Jie was keeping silent, his eyes mischievously observing her front teeth.

Her face immediately changed and she covered her mouth, looking at him vigilantly. Thinking of that time in Zhen Cui Lou (\*restaurant), she was afraid he would pinch her nose again to

force her to open her mouth.

Zhao Jie's lips twitched. She was short a tooth there, so her speech was affected by the bare gums. The pronunciation also sounded a bit funny. That word 'crying' sounded especially amusing when she said it. Too bad her pretty little head was particularly serious. It seemed like so long as he laughed about it, she would turn hostile at once. His eyes were laughing, but he put on a decent expression, as he asked her solemnly: "Ah Luo, right? Are you afraid of cats?"

Wei Luo glared at him without speaking.

He wanted to ask her again, when the maiden beside him curiously walked over. "Cousin Jing, who is she?"

Zhao Jie didn't like children, he had no patience for any kid under ten years old. Anyone who knew him was aware of that. Yet today, he was unexpectedly willing to get close to a little girl, and even personally wiped her tears. This was really too rare. The maiden couldn't help sizing up Wei Luo, finding her appearance adorable and much prettier than the average little girl. Could that be the reason?

The maiden was called Gao Danyang, precisely that older daughter of Duke Zhen's wife. She was a year younger than Zhao Jie. They were of similar age and were cousins from the mother's line. Having grown up together from childhood, their relationship was closer than usual. Just now, Zhao Jie had gone to pay respects to Empress Chen in the Zhaoyang palace hall, and had happened to meet Gao Danyang there. Empress Chen had then made the two of them leave together. It wasn't good for Zhao Jie to refute the Empress' intentions, so he complied. After walking for a while, he had chanced on the scene of Wei Luo and the kitten getting tangled together.

Zhao Jie withdrew his hand and spoke as he got up: "She's the fourth miss of Duke Ying's house, Wei Luo." Pausing his words, he

looked at Wei Luo. “Did this prince say it right?”

Wei Luo didn’t answer. Pulling on Liang Yurong’s hand, she cordially said: “Yurong and I didn’t know the cats belonged to big brother Prince Jing. We only wanted to give them something to eat. If we made big brother Prince Jing and big sister unhappy, let us go back and leave it at that.”

Done speaking, she turned around to walk away.

Zhao Jie called out for her to stop. Holding in his laughter, he said: “It’s only a cat. If you like it, just take it away directly.”

From the side, the dignified Gao Danyang couldn’t hide her frown.

Wei Luo shook her head and raised a pair of large watery eyes with a slight smile: “Thank you big brother Prince Jing, but since big sister gave the cats to you, Ah Luo couldn’t want them.”

\*

After the little girl left, Zhao Jie withdrew his gaze and the happy expression in his eyes also receded. He said to Gao Danyang: “This place is not far from Wild Goose house, you don’t need me to send you off. Go by yourself, alright?”

Gao Danyang, holding the kitten to her bosom, hadn’t moved a step. When she saw him prepare to walk away, she hurriedly called out “Cousin Jing”. A little offended, she arrived to his front and said: “Does cousin Jing not like cats? If you don’t, say something. I’ll take them home right away, or give them to Liuli. She’s wanted these cats for a while now.”

The person she’d just mentioned was Princess Tianji, Zhao Liuli, Zhao Jie’s younger sister from the same mother. Zhao Liuli was seven this year, precisely at the age where she liked kittens and puppies. Who knew how long she’d coveted those three cats. Each time she saw them, she was unable to put them down. Unfortunately, Gao Danyang had already given the cats to Zhao

Jie. Zhao Liuli didn't dare ask for them from Zhao Jie, and could only come every day after morning classes to take a look and to pet them.

These were Persian cats with blue eyes and white fur, a small build, only three months old. They were delicate and nimble, absolutely adorable, easily invoking the young ladies' favor.

Because of this, Zhao Jie could afford to be careless. He was busy. Sometimes he couldn't attend to his own needs, where would he get the time to look after cats? He was raising them inside the palace, so he basically had no worries. The palace maids all knew those were his cats and didn't dare to neglect them. Whenever he was away from the palace, they took turns feeding the little things. So in the past few months, these three cats had been living quite well.

Zhao Jie was puzzled. "Why would you say that?"

Gao Danyang paused and stroked the kitten's ears, her mood dejected: "A moment ago, you readily wanted to give it to that little girl..."

Zhao Jie smiled wordlessly and did not refute. He really wanted to give it to Wei Luo, because he felt like the cat resembled her very much. Tiny, pure white, somewhat delicate, yet somewhat haughty. He didn't dislike that, on the contrary, he found it fascinating. What a pity, the little girl was unwilling to accept. Even when he wanted to gift it, he was unable to.

Zhao Jie thought it over and said: "If you want, you can give them to Liuli. I can see she's fond of them. Besides, I don't have the time to take care of them." Done speaking, he departed, taking large strides towards Riverside house.

Gao Danyang was staring at his back dejectedly, her lips pursed. Having dropped her composure, she finally revealed the pampered attitude of a young miss.

Seeing this, the maidservant in a pale rose short jacket and skirt standing behind her, couldn't help opening her mouth to say: "His Highness Prince Jing really can't read the mood. How could he give away the cat Miss gave him to another person..."

Gao Danyang approved of her words on the inside, but pretended to be displeased on the outside, as she eyed her with a tilted head. "How can you carelessly comment on cousin Jing? Slap your mouth."

The maidservant laughed, knowing she wasn't really angry, and put on an act of touching her own face. "This servant spoke out of turn, pardon me, Miss... But how can this servant not feel wronged on your behalf? You've been fond of His Highness Prince Jing for all these years, yet His Highness seems not to notice."

Gao Danyang was silent as her complexion changed.

She hadn't considered it before, but it suddenly crossed her mind now. Perhaps it wasn't that he didn't notice, but that he pretended not to notice.

Zhao Jie's natural disposition was indifferent, and didn't treat anyone too warmly. She used to think that it was a part of his nature, something he couldn't change. Yet she actually saw a foreign side to him today. It turned out he could also tenderly wipe someone's tears. Unfortunately, the target wasn't her. Gao Danyang pursed her pink lips, getting more curious about Wei Luo. She spoke as she walked: "Go and make some inquiries, what connection does the fourth Miss of Duke Ying's house have with cousin Jing? You can't let others know I'm the one who's asking."

The maidservant naturally knew how to handle this. Nodding in response, she drew back from her side without a trace.

\*

The birthday feast for Empress Chen this time had an additional purpose besides celebrating. It was to look for a study companion

for the sixth princess Tianji. Princess Tianji was born with a weak body, so Empress Chen cherished and protected her firmly under her wing. For so many years, she'd never let her meet with others. After she turned five, her health had improved to some extent, and Empress Chen had started to loosen her hold, slowly letting her come in contact with outsiders. However, that was only limited to the palace people and no one else, so besides the palace people, the other noble daughters hadn't seen Zhao Liuli's face before. Even Gao Danyang and Gao Qingyang only saw her occasionally, during the times they came paying respects to Empress Chen in the palace.

Inside Zhaoyang hall in the Qingxi palace, Empress Chen was reclining on the rosewood arhat bed, wearing a red muslin robe woven with gold peonies, below it a long plated skirt with dragon clouds pattern. Her expression was relaxed, as she leisurely swung the sandalwood fan in her hand. "Where's Liuli?"

Below her stood an old nurse in a honey-colored dress with her hands folded together, who respectfully said: "Answering the Empress, Her Highness ran out just now, saying she wanted to prepare a birthday gift for you."

"This kid..." Empress Chen's tone was helpless, but her eyes were smiling. Suddenly recalling something, she lowered her head to ask the old nurse, "Did she drink her medicine?"

The old nurse's expression was stiff as she shook her head: "Her Highness wasn't willing to drink the medicine... It barely entered her mouth, and she spat it out."

Empress Chen's smile faded, as her face turned serious. This daughter was her treasure, with her poor health from childhood, and constantly relying on medicine, she was unable say one harsh word to her, afraid of being too controlling. Her first son had died at ten years old, weighing heavy on her mind for so many years. She didn't want to lose her young daughter the same way, never living past ten. At present, Liuli was already seven. The empress lived in fear day after day, earnestly wishing that her health would

take a turn for the better.

Empress Chen sighed. After thinking for a long time, she made a decision and called out to the old nurse nearby: "Assign more people to look after Liuli, make sure she's safe... If she meets some minister's daughter, don't block them, watch over them from the side. If any of them can make Liuli obediently drink her medicine, then let that person enter the palace to be Liuli's study partner." She paused as she went over her own thoughts. "Liuli is seven years old after all, she shouldn't be away from people. Try to find her a suitable playmate. If she's having fun, her body may also get better quickly."

The old nurse repeatedly said, "The Empress thinks of Her Highness so much, Her Highness will surely get healthier, will grow up safely."

Empress Chen smiled bitterly, "I hope so."

Somewhere else, Princess Tianji heard the bustling and excitement at the shore of the great lake, so she asked the palace maids to lead her over there. She was very curious, never having seen so many people, and wanted to take a look at the distant activity. Empress Chen had been overprotective of her. Though she was seven, her mentality was even purer than other children her age, and she was ignorant of many things.

She took a cobblestone lane, with dazzling dark red scarlet banana flowers on the sides. Not too far ahead was precisely Wild Goose house, where people's silhouettes could be seen moving inside. Everything was new to her, and she couldn't help quickening her steps. Turning around a corner, she passed by a statue, then suddenly came to a stop.

In front of her were standing two young girls, almost as big as her. Having collided with each other, both sides were a little surprised.

Liang Yurong exclaimed, pointing at the statue behind Zhao



Liuli, “Why are we back here? Ah Luo, we’re lost.”

## Chapter 22

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When Liang Yurong and Wei Luo had come out, they had only taken along two old nurses, who were also entering the palace for the first time. Following this twisting and remote footpath inside the palace courtyard for some time, they had gotten completely lost. Wild Goose house was obviously in front of them, yet no matter how much they walked, they couldn't reach it. They had passed by the same statue, returning to their original position.

Right now the palace maids and eunuchs were busy working, so no one came to this place. Even if they wanted to find a person to ask for directions, they couldn't. The two nurses were just getting worried, their foreheads sweating, when some palace maids and nurses escorting a young lady dressed in brocade clothes, suddenly appeared before them and walked over.

Being able to walk anywhere in the palace, and also having such a huge escort, this young lady's status was probably not simple. Secretly trying to figure out Zhao Liuli's identity, the nurses retreated to the side, waiting for the opposite party to introduce themselves. Sure enough, a nurse with some seniority, wearing an ash blue court dress, asked: "Who are you? Why are you here? You're still not greeting the princess."

It turned out to be a princess.

The two old nurses hurriedly saluted, signaling with their eyes to Wei Luo and Liang Yurong, reminding them in a whisper: "Little miss, quickly make your greetings together with this servant."

During this month, Wei Luo had learned plenty of court etiquette from Mrs. Han, so she smoothly followed along. After properly saluting, she calmly sized up Zhao Liuli. Emperor Chong Zhen had altogether eight princesses. The first five were already over ten years old, while the sixth and seventh were of a similar age – one seven, the other six years old. The sixth princess was Empress

Chen's child, and the seventh princess was Noble Consort Ning's. She just didn't know whether it was the sixth or seventh child in front of her.

As Wei Luo was sizing up Zhao Liuli, Zhao Liuli was also curiously looking at them.

She was cooped inside the palace all year round, mostly coming in contact with palace maids and nurses, their ages all bigger than hers. She rarely met young ladies of a similar age. Empress Chen didn't allow her to approach her seventh younger sister Zhao Linlang. She was actually very lonely, staying in the palace by herself. Although mother Empress and big brother both loved her dearly, she still wanted to have her own playmate. Zhao Linlang had many playmates. Each time she went to the back garden, she could see her and several other little girls talking excitedly and making a commotion. While she could only look from afar and secretly envy them. In fact, Gao Qingyang was also alright, but she rarely entered the palace, and when she did occasionally visit, she didn't seem all that willing to play with her. If her body was healthy, Zhao Liuli thought, if she wasn't so ill, she could also be laughing and playing with the other little girls, and creating a disturbance.

Both sides were looking at each other for some time. Wei Luo noticed the opposite party was looking at them eagerly, as if she wanted to approach them but was too embarrassed to, and couldn't help finding it amusing. Her eyes spun as she started thinking. Pointing at Wild Goose house behind herself, she asked: "Do you know how to get there? We want to go over there."

Zhao Liuli pursed her lips and gently nodded.

The nurse nearby had received Empress Chen's instructions. Seeing Wei Luo chatting with princess Tianji now, she didn't stop them, but was rather happy to observe.

Wei Luo truly wanted to return to Wild Goose house. She had

been out with Liang Yurong for too long, and fourth aunt was surely getting worried by now, after not hearing from them. She asked: "Can you lead us there?"

Zhao Liuli felt extremely flattered, pleasant surprise showing on her small face, and she nodded in consent. She rarely met any outsiders. Other people minded her status and never dared to talk to her of their own initiative, making her feel alienated with their deference. Now there was someone treating her normally, and even asking her for help. She was naturally pleased, blushing as she said: "I also intended to go over there."

\*

Princess Tianji's body was weak, but the problem didn't stem from her birth. Instead, it was the result of someone's schemes inside the palace.

When she was a year old, she was given poison by Consort Shu's maid. At that time she had narrowly kept her life, with a dozen Imperial physicians laboring to save her for a whole day and night. Although Consort Shu was ordered to commit suicide afterward, the deed was done. She'd been weak ever since, having to drink medicine daily. She detested that rank, bitter concoction. After drinking it for 5-6 years continuously, just smelling it was enough to make her feel like throwing up.

However, it was because of that medicine that she was able to live to the present.

She hadn't walked many steps, when Zhao Liuli's small face paled, gasping for breath as she held Nurse Qiu's hand for support, "Nurse, I'm a bit tired..."

Nurse Qiu's expression stiffened as she held her up in a hurry. "What happened, Your Highness? Can't catch your breath?" In the end, she said remorsefully: "The reason should be not drinking the medicine this morning. It's all this servant's fault, I shouldn't have indulged your temper..."

At this moment, Zhao Liuli could neither speak, nor listen. Her body was curled up in pain.

Fortunately, they weren't too far from Wild Goose house. Nurse Qiu promptly carried her in her arms and headed for the building, instructing the palace maids as she walked: "Quick, quickly bring sixth princess' medicine!"

Wei Luo and Liang Yurong followed behind, now realizing she was the sixth princess Zhao Liuli.

There were several richly dressed noble women on the first floor of Wild Goose house, talking and laughing merrily. They soon noticed a nurse carrying a little girl, rushing over with an anxious expression, in the middle of saying "Your Highness, please hold on a little longer". Startled, they stood up to salute in succession, but Nurse Qiu was unable to attend to their greetings. She placed Zhao Liuli on a glazed couch and lightly stroked her back. "Your Highness, do you feel a little better? Can you breathe now?"

A good while later, Zhao Liuli's complexion finally improved. Though her face was still pale, it wasn't as scary as just now. She nodded softly, only to realize she was surrounded by many people, all looking at her. There was some curiosity in their gazes, some probing, but even more was the sympathy... She shrank back, hiding in Nurse Qiu's arms.

Nurse Qiu didn't pay attention to her mood. Soon after, a maidservant in a yellow dress came in, carrying a bowl of medicine in both hands. "Nurse, sixth princess' medicine is here."

Nurse Qiu took the large copper-rimmed enamel bowl from the tray, and gently helped Zhao Liuli up, propping her against the pillows. She scooped up a spoonful of medicine to feed her: "Your Highness, come, once you finish drinking this bowl of medicine you'll feel better."

Facing this both smelly and bitter medicine, Zhao Liuli, who had drunk it for 5-6 years, was more clear than anyone about its taste.

She subconsciously got nauseous, and shook her head stubbornly: "I won't drink. Bitter."

After she said that, she tightly shut her mouth. No matter how Nurse Qiu coaxed her, she was not willing to open it.

This made Nurse Qiu very anxious, how could she not drink the medicine? This sickness had made her suffer so much a moment ago, precisely because she hadn't drunk the medicine earlier. If she didn't drink it now, she would most certainly have a problem later. What to do then? For so many years they had depended on this bowl of medicine to preserve the princess' life. Now she didn't want to take it, didn't she care for her own life? Nurse Qiu thought of the heartache Empress Chen had gone through all these years, and couldn't help but tear up.

"Your Highness, I'm begging you, drink the medicine... If you don't, the Empress will be very worried when she hears of this..." She was patiently persuading her, wishing she could personally drink this bowl of medicine in Zhao Liuli's stead.

Unfortunately, Zhao Liuli wasn't listening to any of her words, shaking her head and saying "I won't, I won't drink." Nurse Qiu brought the medicine to her mouth, but she smacked the spoon away, her eyes red: "I won't drink it. Why don't others have to drink medicine, but only I have to? Nurse, I want to be like the other girls... I also want to fly a kite and kick a shuttlecock. I don't want to drink medicine daily... The medicine's bitter..." The more she spoke, the harder she cried, until she ended up sobbing in Nurse Qiu's arms.

Listening to her, Nurse Qiu was feeling extremely sorry for her, cursing that year's murderer over and over in her mind. "Your Highness..."

The two of them were sorrowful, and the noble women nearby finally came to realize that this was Empress Chen's most beloved princess Tianji. Harboring various thoughts, one by one they went

forward to console.

One was saying that drinking the medicine would make her healthy, the other was asking the princess not to cry, but it was all useless. Zhao Liuli was still as sad as before and listened to nobody.

Just as the group of people was feeling helpless, they heard a clear voice resounding from outside: "One, two, three..."

Everyone's attention was drawn by this voice as they looked outside.

They saw a young girl in a cherry-colored light dress kicking a shuttlecock under the weeping willow, while another girl was helping her count. The noble women knit their eyebrows, thinking the two children weren't sensible. Didn't they see the princess crying so sadly just now? They didn't come to comfort, but went to play instead, really bad-mannered.

But gradually, their attention was captured by the girl kicking the shuttlecock. Her body was as lithe as a swallow, showing one trick after another. Raising her foot to kick, the red embroidered shoes steadily received the shuttlecock in the air. After kicking it again, she waited for its fall and her left foot reached out, as she jumped to catch the shuttlecock in another kind of pose... Swallow, double swallow, mandarin duck turn, double mandarin duck turn (\*techniques), she was nimble and graceful as she moved, delighting the spectators and making them clap in praise. Unknowing, everyone's eyes were attracted by her as they stopped what they were doing to watch. Even princess Tianji who was breathless from crying, was unable to take her eyes off of her, looking on with admiration.

Wei Luo's hair was styled in two buns, each held by a red silk ribbon. The ribbons were decorated with four small gilded bells respectively. Each time she kicked, the bells jingled along.

Accompanied by the sound, Wei Luo kicked a full hundred times before she stopped. Her legs were aching as she hadn't played this

for quite a while and wasn't able to keep it up. During her previous life in the small farmhouse, she would kick the shuttlecock together with the neighbor's little girl whenever she wasn't busy. She was better at it than anyone, she could kick more than 300 times.

At that time, she had definitely never expected that she would use this skill to amuse a seven year old little girl one day.

She picked up the shuttlecock and walked inside. As she approached the glazed couch, she looked at Zhao Liuli with a smile: "Sixth princess, did I kick well just now?"

Zhao Liuli was in a daze, but quickly composing herself, she looked at her respectfully and nodded like a chicken pecking rice: "Yes!"

More than just well, she was simply too good! She hadn't seen anyone play better than her.

Wei Luo grinned and asked in a soft milky voice: "Do you want to learn?"

Zhao Liuli nodded her head even harder, suddenly feeling much closer to her: "Want!" Saying that, she paused, then asked uncertainly: "Can you teach me?"

"Sure I can." Wei Luo's smiling face was adorable. Having played too much a moment ago, the tip of her nose shone with a thin layer of sweat. Her glossy face was radiant under the sunlight, as if sculpted out of crystal. After she answered, she saw that Zhao Liuli was feeling happy from this topic, and went on saying: "But you need a healthy body to kick the shuttlecock, otherwise it's easy to get hurt. If you want to learn, get better first. I'll teach you then."

She didn't know why she was doing this. Maybe after seeing her cry so pitifully, she felt a little sympathetic.

Zhao Liuli's eyes lit up as she grabbed her sleeve to ask: "If I get better, you can teach me all those tricks?"



Wei Luo tilted her head, looking at her, “Of course.” Saying that, she blinked her eyes and pointed at the medicine on top of the coated with gold sandalwood tea table, “But you have to drink the medicine first.”

Zhao Liuli was sincerely convinced by her, and taking her at her word, rushed to say: “I’ll drink, I’ll drink. Don’t forget your promise.”

Supporting her cheek in her hand, Wei Luo laughed softly, but didn’t speak.

She would certainly not renege on a promise, because it was unlikely for Zhao Liuli’s body to recuperate. In her previous life, princess Tianji had been bedridden with a lingering disease for several years. Her body had been weak, and she ultimately couldn’t live over 16. She had perished at 16, making Wei Luo think of herself. They were equally pitiful, unable to live till an old age. That’s why Wei Luo decided to help her. If she properly took her medicine this time, would she be able to live for a few more years?

Nurse Qiu was crying tears of joy nearby, having a whole new level of respect for Wei Luo. She was so grateful, she didn’t know what to do. “The medicine got cold. This servant will make someone go and heat it up. Princess, please wait a moment.”

Zhao Liuli agreed, patiently waiting for the palace maids to return with the warm medicine. She didn’t need Nurse Qiu to feed her. Holding up the bowl, she obediently gulped it down sip by sip.

At long last, things returned to normal in Wild Goose house. Everyone’s gazes fell on the little girl next to the couch, their expressions varying. Seemingly unaware, Wei Luo was about to go upstairs to look for fourth aunt, when she noticed Madam Qin rushing down the stairs, looking worried.

Wei Luo brought her to a stop, calling out to her: “Fourth aunt!”

Madam Qin turned her head to look, and seeing it was her,

hurriedly stepped forward to hug her. Without enough time to ask her where she'd gone, she was urgently speaking while making her way out: "Ah Luo, come with me quickly. Just now, someone told me that Changhong had a conflict with Prince Ruyang's successor and was pushed into the lake by him..."

Wei Luo's smiling expression froze, her small face clouding over immediately.

With Changhong's temper, how would he have a conflict with anyone? Unless the other party intended to seek trouble.

She had an impression of Prince Ruyang's son Li Song, since he was largely responsible for Changhong's misfortune in her past life, going so far as to conspire together with Wei Zheng and her mother.

Her eyes grew cold. Last time Li Song had appeared in this exact manner. Why did they argue? He actually dared to push Changhong in the water. If Changhong got hurt, she wanted Li Song to die a hundred times over.

Wei Luo was holding onto Madam Qin's neck, her pink lips pursed in a line, her expression dark and cold. Raising her head, she unexpectedly met someone's line of sight.

At the lake shore opposite the building, Zhao Jie was standing under the same willow tree, where she had kicked the shuttlecock earlier. His lips were held up in a smile as he gave her a deep look.

Madam Qin hugged her tighter and walked faster, leaving him far behind. He stood there for a moment, then slowly started strolling after them.

## Chapter 23

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When they arrived at the lake shore, there were already many people there – high officials from the imperial court, nobles from influential families, and also palace servants who had rushed to the rescue... Wei Luo noticed a person lying on the ground in the distance, soaked through and motionless. Wei Kun was crouching beside him, continuously pressing his acupoints, but the person had no reaction.

Wei Luo paled. She crawled down from Madam Qin and bolted towards them on her short legs, “Changhong!”

It was early summer and the lake wasn’t too cold, but it was deep. If he had sunk to the bottom, it would’ve been difficult to save him quickly enough. If he wasn’t rescued in time... Only just thinking of it frightened Wei Luo. Not daring to dwell on it, she grabbed Changhong’s arm tightly and called his name, “Changhong, wake up...”

She was afraid. Though she was perfectly aware that Changhong couldn’t possibly die today, she didn’t feel reassured. What if her own rebirth had influenced fixed events and made them deviate?

She had promised she’d protect Changhong, yet she hadn’t watched over him well enough, and had let him have such an accident.

With these thoughts, Wei Luo raised her head and looked maliciously at the young boy across from her, who was wearing a sapphire robe. The boy was seven or eight years old. His appearance was pretty, yet his pair of eyes were arrogant, giving him a wild look. Right now, he was pursing his rosy lips. As he glanced over, he caught Wei Luo’s line of sight. At first he gawked at her, but scoffed soon after and turned his head, no longer looking at her.

That was Prince Ruyang’s son, Li Song. Even if he didn’t look

quite the same as to when he grew up, Wei Luo could still recognize him. Because there was an obvious feature on his face. That was a small birthmark under his left eye, light pink in a swallow tail shape. It made his face very eye-catching. Standing next to him was the tall and sturdy Prince Ruyang. Prince Ruyang was in the middle of lecturing him with a serious face, his voice so loud, almost half the palace could hear.

Prince Ruyang was devoted to the military. His body was robust, his martial skill was out of the ordinary. He had once followed Emperor Chong Zhen through fire and water, taking over the world together. When Emperor Chong Zhen gained power, he conferred him the rank of Prince, regarding him as a close brother (in arms). Prince Ruyang married Emperor Chong Zhen's younger sister, the Princess Gaoyang, Zhao Xuan. Zhao Xuan had been a famous beauty in the capital several years ago, her body was delicate, her face bright like the moon, her temper pure. One was a pampered and fragile princess, the other was a rough fellow from an army camp. No matter how one looked, they weren't a suitable match. At the time, none of the people in the capital were optimistic about the marriage, including princess Gaoyang. She wasn't fond of these types of military men. The type she liked was the mild and gentle, scholarly youths. Rumors said she had rebelled against Emperor Chong Zhen once, but it was unfortunately useless. In the end, she had to marry according to her brother's decision.

Fortunately, after getting married, Li Zhiliang didn't treat her badly, he favored her. Soon after, they gave birth to a son and a daughter. Li Song was eight this year, the daughter Li Xiang was five.

Why did the past Li Song make life difficult for Changhong? For what reason did he both destroy his future, and ruin his reputation?

Wei Luo knew the reason.

At that time, Duke Ying's house and Prince Ruyang's palace were discussing a marriage between Changhong and Li Xiang. The 14 year old Li Xiang already had someone in mind, and didn't like Changhong. She liked the heroic bearing of the champion in the Imperial military exam. In order to get rid of this marriage without destroying her own reputation, Li Xiang begged her big brother Li Song to find a way to ruin Changhong's reputation, so when the time came, she wouldn't need to do a thing and let her parents refuse the marriage themselves. Thus, Li Song tricked Changhong into taking [Five Minerals Powder](#), causing him to be muddleheaded all day, dazed, passing his days unproductively. Recalling the despicable thing this pair of brother and sister had done, Wei Luo gnashed her teeth in hatred.

Li Xiang's heart wasn't into it, but she just had to drag Changhong down. When had he ever wronged her? She herself was dirty, yet had to throw dirty water on Changhong as well, like a prostitute keeping up a pure image. Wei Luo had never met such a low person.

Thinking of these matters, she was so furious, her whole body was trembling. Changhong's current state was still uncertain, on what basis were they properly alive? Were their lives more valuable than Changhong's?

She lowered her head, her thin small shoulders violently shivering. To others it seemed like she was crying, but only she knew it was out of loathing.

Wishing she could let them die right now, wishing they could immediately suffer their retribution.

She was biting her pink lips, unknowingly causing them to bleed, but she didn't feel any pain. The scarlet blood dripped on the back of Changhong's hand, offending the eyes with its stark red contrast. She used her thumb to earnestly wipe it away. Her throat seemed to be blocked up, letting out a whimper. The current and the past lifetime's memories overlapped. She said: "Changhong,

don't die... Don't die."

The words had just come out of her mouth, when a pair of hands lifted her up from behind. Zhao Jie's voice was calm and slow, "He won't die. This Prince will have someone save him."

As he said that, Zhu Geng came forward and took Wei Kun's spot. Placing both hands on Changhong's chest, he started pushing rhythmically (CPR). Zhao Jie placed Wei Luo to the side, but she simply disregarded him. She was staring unwaveringly at the activity taking place, until Changhong spat out a mouthful of lake water, his body curling up as he coughed.

"Changhong!"

Wei Luo felt joy, as if a heavy stone had lifted from her heart. Her feet flew as she dashed in his direction, but Zhao Jie's arm unexpectedly blocked her path. Wei Luo couldn't stop in time, so her whole body crashed into Zhao Jie's arms, knocking into his chest and hurting her nose. Zhao Jie laughed softly. Extricating her from his embrace, he bent down to pinch her small nose, "Why the rush? The person's right there, he won't run away."

She saw Changhong sit up, while Wei Kun was worriedly asking him where he felt uncomfortable. He shook his head twice, silent the whole time. He'd always been reserved. Now that he'd been pushed into the water, he felt even worse at heart, but he didn't say anything. He always kept his feelings bottled up inside.

Wei Luo got more anxious as she observed. She pushed away Zhao Jie's hand. "I want to see my younger brother..."

Zhao Jie, however, was determined not to let her pass. Since they happened to be standing behind the crowd, they weren't too noticeable. Zhao Jie held out a thumb to gently rub at her soft pink lips a few times. Finding it a little painful, she wrinkled her eyebrows and mewled in complaint. He let her go, then looked at the blood on his thumb and asked solemnly, "Whom were you loathing a moment ago?"

Other people may not have found out, but he had been paying attention to her, so he saw a lot more compared to others. The little girl had been barely restraining her emotions. When she had looked at Li Song, her eyes had been ice-cold, containing an enormous amount of anger and hatred. This side of her was a little different from his impression of her, yet he didn't find it conflicting. This kind of feeling was very strange, as if anything she did was natural – whether it was her viciously biting him, or her sweetly calling him “big brother”, or her struggling to contain her anger just now, every side of her felt fresh to him. She had many hidden sides, enough for him to discover them one by one.

Wei Luo tightly pursed her lips, a speck of blood lingering at the corner. She looked like a small stubborn wild beast, waiting for a person to tame her slowly.

Zhao Jie smiled. “Let This Prince guess, is it Li Song or Wei Kun?”

She paused, her clear large black eyes boring into him. She didn't admit nor refute it.

She hated both of them. She hated Li Song for ruining Changhong, and hated Wei Kun for failing to protect Changhong.

However currently, she hated Li Song more.

Zhao Jie evidently guessed her train of thoughts, and asked neither too fast, nor too slow, “Why do you hate him? Because he pushed your younger brother in the water?”

Wei Luo was silent for a long time, then she opened her mouth slowly, “He bullied Changhong.”

Indeed, wasn't it precisely bullying Changhong, that Li Song did? Wei Luo didn't want to let Zhao Jie know too much, neither did she want him to discover her sinister side. Right now, she could only pretend and try to cover up that side. She was only a six year old girl, why would she know what bitter hatred was?

Zhao Jie curved his lips. Whether he believed her or not wasn't known. He looked at her for a good while, then touched her head as he asked softly, "Do you want to bully him back?"

Wei Luo raised her head in surprise, meeting his eyes. She didn't understand why he wanted to ask that.

What did he mean? What if she wanted to?

Wei Luo's pretty little face had wariness all over it. She did not answer his question.

Not far from them, Wei Kun was looking high and low for her. When he couldn't find her, he parted the crowd, just in time to see her speaking with Zhao Jie. Greeting him, he said, "This official has seen Your Highness Prince Jing. Did Your Highness have any matter with my daughter?"

Zhao Jie straightened up, wiping off the smile on his face. When he turned around, he'd already switched to a cool expression. He said: "Fourth Miss cried just now, this prince was calming her down."

Wei Kun didn't doubt him, saying quite sincerely: "Many thanks, Your Highness, for going through the trouble..."

Wei Luo had the opportunity to break free from Zhao Jie at last, running back to Wei Changhong's side. The imperial physician had rushed over just then. After he had treated Changhong, there were no longer any issues. Changhong noticed her coming over, and finally opened his mouth to speak his first sentence, "Ah Luo..."

However, he appeared sluggish and not too cheerful.

Wei Luo raised her sleeve to wipe the water droplets on his face, making a small noise in response. Others weren't able to hear what was said.

Even if they couldn't hear, they were able to feel the deep affection between the siblings. It was no wonder really, as the two children had no mother, they had to rely on each other.



As this beautiful scene fell into the bystanders' eyes, it made them feel envious for no reason.

Zhao Jie stood with his hands behind his back, looking at the siblings serenely. No one could tell what he was actually thinking.

\*

After some questioning from Wei Luo, Changhong finally told her how the dispute with Li Song had come to be.

Changhong and her were twins of different gender. Their appearance was 70% similar, with beautiful and delicate features. That was good for Wei Luo, but a little inconvenient to Changhong. He was young right now and had yet to develop. At first glance, he resembled a girl. Usually, there were people who discussed Changhong's appearance, but they did so quietly among themselves. No one had dared to do it so openly before. This Prince Ruyang's son, Li Song, was the first.

He not only ridiculed Changhong for being effeminate, but also wanted him to imitate the little girls' manner of speaking. He even pulled out a silk flower from some palace maid's hair, and insisted that Changhong put it on his head. Changhong naturally didn't agree. Just because he didn't speak, didn't mean he was willing to be ordered around. Li Song saw he wasn't complying and also absolutely refusing to put things on his head, and the two of them had entered a dispute like that, even involving hands and feet. Changhong was two years younger than Li Song, he was no match for him in the end. His belly suffered several hits, and he was eventually lifted by the collar and directly thrown into the big lake.

When Wei Luo heard his belly was hit, she hurriedly made him lift up his clothes, "Let me see."

They were outside, with many people surrounding them. Changhong was naturally unwilling, grabbing his clothes as he spoke: "It's nothing... It doesn't hurt."

It would be odd if it didn't hurt! Li Song was born to a military commander dad, his own skill would definitely not fall short. Having suffered his two fists, Changhong was certainly unable to endure them.

Yet he deceived her, claiming it didn't hurt.

Wei Luo raised her eyes to glare at the standing across Li Song. Her icy gaze seemed able to penetrate through, she didn't conceal her anger at all. It was a first for Li Song to receive such a look from a little girl. He jumped in fright, before he quickly collected himself, saying obstinately: "What are you looking at? You two look so much alike, you're female, and he's male, how can I clearly tell you apart? It's not strange at all if I get it wrong."

Twisting words and forcing logic.

Hearing him, Prince Ruyang scolded, "disgraceful", before pulling him in front of Changhong, and then flung him to the ground harshly, "What did I tell you just now? Still not apologizing."

Li Song stumbled a few steps, coming to a stop. His eyes looked at Changhong, then at Wei Luo again. He didn't have the slightest intention of sincerely apologizing.

The people around were dispersed, only leaving behind a few eunuchs, as well as people from the Ying residence and the Ruyang palace. Li Zhiliang saluted Wei Kun and spoke rather remorsefully: "It's This Prince's fault for not teaching my child properly and for offending the young master, but also seeking brother Sheng Ming superior's magnanimity to forgive the child."

What use was it to apologize now? And even calling himself "This Prince". Then what about Wei Kun's son? Wei Kun's complexion didn't look too well, but he still returned the courtesy, "Small children are mischievous, being boisterous is common. The Prince need not blame yourself." He paused. A mild person could also have a temper. "It's just that Changhong's life is only one, he can't

withstand being tossed about. I hope there won't be a next time."

Prince Ruyang smiled and promptly said, "Brother Sheng Ming's words are very true. This Prince will carefully discipline this child when we go back."

At the same time, Li Song was still dawdling on his apology to Changhong. Finally, after Prince Ruyang waved his fist threateningly, he curled his lip and spoke with a complete lack of sincerity, "It was my bad just now, I shouldn't have thrown you in the water. Anyway, you're fine, so we can consider the matter settled."

Wei Luo smiled stiffly. What "anyway, you're fine"? If something had happened, wouldn't it be too late?

Prince Ruyang also felt these words were improper, angrily shaking his fist as if to hit him, "Speak properly for your father..."

Wei Luo looked at him, a sly light flashing through her eyes. Her tone was indignant, bringing out a young girl's unique frailty: "You pushed my brother into the water. If you let me also push you in once, we'll forgive you."

Wei Kun yelled: "Ah Luo!"

However, no one went to stop her. That was a matter between their children, and sometimes it wasn't good for the adults to interfere. In addition, Wei Luo was a girl. Her age was also small. No matter what she said, it would be taken as a child's words having no filter.

He glanced at Li Zhiliang. Li Zhiliang furrowed his brows, seemingly thinking her request was a little unreasonable.

Li Zhiliang hadn't opened his mouth yet, when Li Song laughed. Having something else in mind, he conceitedly agreed: "So what? Let alone doing it once, even if you push me a hundred times, it won't be a problem."

Li Song relied on his beginner martial arts, and he had learned

how to swim as a child. He simply wasn't concerned with Wei Luo's words. Finding them amusing instead, he complied without a moment's hesitation. Treat it as taking a bath. He was broad-minded and wouldn't haggle with her.

Li Zhiliang was reluctant to agree, fearing that his son could be harmed. But since he was going to watch over them from the side, he didn't say anything. This way, he would appear to make amends sincerely, and not like someone using his rank to bully others.

Seeing Li Song's confidence, Wei Luo sneered slightly.

Laugh, laugh while you still can.

\*

At this time, Emperor Chong Zhen and Empress Chen still hadn't arrived, but it was only a matter of time. Everybody was waiting for them in the Wild Goose house and Riverside house, thus not many were paying attention to Wei Luo's situation over here.

The great lake's shore was smooth, built in stone and about a foot and a half higher than the water surface. It was the same height everywhere. Wei Luo stood at the shore and raised her head to look at Li Song, "I'll push you from here. If you can come up, we'll regard the matter settled."

She imitated his previous words, her young voice tinted with childishness. She was obviously still a child, who didn't understand anything, yet her face was stiff, carrying a solemn appearance. Li Song found it funny, and basically didn't care about her as he nodded carelessly: "Good. Do it quickly, don't..."

He wasn't done speaking, when Wei Luo raised her hand to place it on his chest and resolutely pushed. Li Song fell backwards from the shore all of a sudden. With both eyes wide open, "splash", he was dunked into the water.

The lake water quickly covered his head. Fortunately, he could swim, and only took a moment to get adjusted. Holding his breath,

he even swam in a circle leisurely, pleased with himself. Floating up to the surface again, he looked at Wei Luo complacently. Prince Ruyang Li Zhiliang sighed in relief from the side, and called out: “You unruly child, still not coming out!”

His arms cut through the water as he swam forward. He intended to climb up from the same place he was pushed in a moment ago, however, his hand had barely taken hold of the stone wall, when he thought something seemed wrong. Wei Luo was crouching in front of him with a smile on her small face. That smile looked so strange, it bewildered him. It gave him the impression he had fallen into a trap. He frowned, “Go away, let me go up!”

Originally, Wei Luo had picked this spot, because the stones were full of moss, wet and slippery. It wouldn't be easy to get out. Normally, it wouldn't be too difficult for Li Song, but Wei Luo was squatting at the shore right now, holding a thin twig in her hand. With her back to the crowd, she used the twig to poke the back of his hand maliciously, smiling as she looked at him disdainfully, “Go down.”

Li Song's expression changed, fuming with rage: “You dare...”

Without waiting for him to finish, Wei Luo increased her strength. The twig firmly dug into his flesh, while she smiled innocently: “Not going down?”

Li Song cried out in pain and quickly removed his hand, falling back into the water.

The people at the shore couldn't see what happened clearly, believing Li Song wasn't able to stand firmly and fell down by himself. In the end, Li Zhiliang felt distressed for his son, calling for the bodyguards in a hurry: “Make haste, help the little prince up.”

His voice just fell, when another voice interrupted.

“Hold on.”

Zhao Jie was standing to the side, his gaze pointed at Wei Luo's figure full of interest. Having seen enough, he said to Li Zhiliang: "Didn't Prince Ruyang agree just now? This is something between the two of them. The little prince went into the water voluntarily, naturally he also has to come out by himself. Why, does Prince Ruyang have no confidence in his own son?"

Not expecting Prince Jing to get involved, Li Zhiliang stiffened up, smiling reluctantly as he said: "It's not like that... It's only..."

Zhao Jie didn't give him the opportunity to speak. He moved his line of sight away and said: "In that case, just wait."

Li Zhiliang was forced to keep waiting.

Under the water, Li Song wanted to come out from another spot, but after swimming around once, he couldn't help but wish to curse her out. Did that little girl do it deliberately? She knew the lake was full of water plants right now, winding and twisting around in spirals, there was simply no way to approach them. Getting near them, it was possible to get tangled up and sink to the bottom of the lake. It seemed that he could only come up from the spot, where Wei Luo was guarding. He got extremely angry, choking on the mouthful of air he'd been barely holding in, as the lake water rushed to his nose and mouth. He swallowed a few mouthfuls of water before his head resurfaced, glaring indignantly at Wei Luo: "You, on purpose?"

Wei Luo stood up and laughed sweetly, "What purpose? What do you mean?"

But her expression clearly said, "That's right, it's on purpose."

Li Song had never met such a hateful little girl before. He wished he could swallow her whole. "Let me go up!"

One on the shore, the other in the water, his imposing manner dropped by a large chunk. Li Song was no longer as conceited and arrogant as he previously was, and he felt a little anxious. He'd

stayed in the water for too long, and due to his rush, his left leg was gradually starting to hurt, which he feared was a sign of an oncoming cramp.

Yet he didn't want to ask for help from his father. He was a boy after all, he had to save face. What would it look like if he lost to a little girl? Moreover, she was two years younger than him!

Wei Luo was obviously smiling, but her eyes were completely cold, "I'm not stopping you."

Li Song clenched his teeth. She wasn't stopping him, but she actually didn't leave him a way out. Was she really six years old? Her scheming was too good!

Neither of them backed down, looking at each other, waiting to see who would last till the end.

In the end, it was Li Song's loss as expected. His left leg cramped. As he was increasingly unable to support his body's weight, he slowly sank. The lake water covered the top of his head. Wei Luo didn't make a sound. A few moments passed before the people on shore realized something was amiss. Prince Ruyang took off his outer coat and jumped into the water to personally pull up his son, "Song'er, Song'er!"

Li Song had drank a belly full of water, but he hadn't died. Only his mind was somewhat hazy. He sought out Wei Luo's form, pointing at her and repeating "you" for quite a while, but nothing else came out. His head drooped to the side as he fainted.

\*

The matter was regarded as having concluded in a draw. Li Song had thrown Changhong into the lake, and Wei Luo had pushed Li Song into the water. No one owed each other, and no one was qualified to speak further.

Even though Prince Ruyang was angered, the opposite party had Prince Jing's protection. It wouldn't be good to say anything, so he

had no choice but to swallow down his grievances.

This year's birthday banquet followed the usual customs. After congratulating Empress Chen, Emperor Chong Zhen ordered his servants to set up a stage at the shore of the great lake for a play. Famous actors elegantly waved their sleeves as they sang "Return of the Phoenix" on the stage. The voices were high-pitched, the meaning of the poems – difficult to understand. Empress Chen wasn't used to listening to opera. She barely persevered through half of it, then got up to bid goodbye to Emperor Chong Zhen.

Emperor Chong Zhen had a decorated black hat on his head. Dressed in his imperial robes, he was still vigorous despite the years gone by, the heroic bearing from his youth could be clearly glimpsed on his face. Hearing that Empress Chen wanted to leave the banquet, his gaze deepened as a smile soon showed up within his expression, turning into an infinitely gentle appearance: "If the Empress leaves, what am I supposed to do here all alone? We might as well go back together."

"No, I came together with ChangSheng (longevity), and I just so happen to have something to talk to him about. Your Majesty is busy with government affairs and rarely has free time. It would be better to accompany the ministers and speak a few words." Empress Chen rejected the emperor to his face and didn't even wait for him to open his mouth. She then said to Zhao Jie who was sitting below: "Come, help your mother go back."

ChangSheng was Zhao Jie's childhood name. It was said that a name represented a wish. Empress Chen's wish was precisely for her two children to have a long and peaceful life.

Zhao Jie got up, similarly bidding Emperor Chong Zhen goodbye, then supported Empress Chen as they departed.

The emperor sat on the dragon chair. For a long time his face remained expressionless.



Qingxi Palace, Zhaoyang palace hall.

Empress Chen was sitting on the ironwood imperial consort couch, listening to Nurse Qiu actively recount the earlier events, when Wei Luo had convinced Princess Tianji to drink the medicine, "...Then the princess said she wanted to drink the medicine right away. Empress, the fourth miss of Duke Ying's house is really competent."

Empress Chen reclined on the couch, holding an ivory snuff bottle in her hands and listened earnestly, "Didn't you say she was six, how can she be this fierce?"

She managed to control Liuli in a few words, making Liuli wholeheartedly listen to her. If it wasn't for Nurse Qiu and the other palace maids' assurances, the empress really wouldn't be able to believe it.

Nurse Qiu nodded repeatedly, and couldn't help but add: "Not only that, that fourth miss also kicks a shuttlecock very attractively..."

Sitting on a fragrant rosewood tutor chair below, Zhao Jie maintained his calm and collected manner, but the corners of his eyes held a smile. Listening to Nurse Qiu praise Wei Luo, he couldn't help but recall the sight he had witnessed himself at that time. The red ribbons in her hair brushed against her face with the wind. Her eyes were focused, only staring at the shuttlecock in the air. She simply hadn't noticed he was also there looking at her.

Those eyes were filled with a spring-like vivacity, bright and turbulent, shining brilliantly. She would deceive people with her words. When she used those eyes to look at you innocently, perhaps her mind was also planning how to make you suffer... Really interesting. Zhao Jie rested his cheek on his palm, thinking of today's scene of Wei Luo bullying Li Song. How could he forget? She was the little chilli pepper who used a hairpin to cut a person's face, not a sheltered greenhouse flower. Whoever tried to bully her

wouldn't have a good outcome.

Zhao Jie looked at Empress Chen, raising his lips as he asked, "Mother, have you decided on Liuli's study companion?"

## Chapter 24

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These days Empress Chen had been troubled over this matter, but hadn't found a suitable candidate yet. At first, she'd meant to let Gao Qingyang be Zhao Liuli's study partner. The two of them were of similar age, and could play together as well. However, Gao Qingyang was very arrogant and willful, and also somewhat reckless. Empress Chen grew afraid that she would accidentally injure Zhao Liuli, thus she couldn't come to a quick decision.

Now, as she listened to Nurse Qiu's words, she actually thought Wei Luo was an appropriate candidate. The empress hesitated for a moment, then slowly asked Zhao Jie: "What do you think about the fourth miss of Duke Ying's house?"

Zhao Jie's lips curled enigmatically as he leaned back on the rosewood chair, both hands folded in front of him, his posture relaxed: "Your son thinks she's smart, witty, cute and sensible. A very suitable candidate."

This was a very high evaluation. Empress Chen threw an amazed glance at him, getting more and more curious about this fourth young lady. She hadn't been able to catch a glimpse of Wei Luo previously, feeling it was quite a pity now. She ought to call her over and see her once. Zhao Jie's judgment was so fastidious. The people he acknowledged were all above average. And now he gave such a high evaluation to a young lady. Just how outstanding was she? Making Liuli and Zhao Jie both sing her praises.

Empress Chen thought it over, then nodded and said: "Since she could make Liuli take her medicine obediently, letting her enter the palace as a study companion is not unreasonable."

Zhao Jie didn't reply, but used his hand to gently stroke over a spot on his right wrist back and forth. The wound there was all healed up, leaving behind uneven tooth marks. Recently, whenever he had something to think about, he would do this

action involuntarily. Feeling the marks, he recalled the time he first met Wei Luo, the scene of her opening her small mouth and viciously biting him.

He laughed silently. Employing this sort of method to ask him for help, she was the first one ever.

He seemed to care too much for a little girl. While it really wasn't a good thing, he nevertheless entertained his curiosity instead of ignoring it. In any case, to him she was only a crafty and amusing little girl with many faces. She was unlikely to cause him any trouble. He even wanted to support her from behind the scene and help her raise hell. He had heard from Zhu Geng that her circumstances in Duke Ying's residence weren't too favorable. The stepmother was vicious, the father was weak, the several elders above them weren't dependable. She had to survive in that kind of environment, while she also wanted to protect her brother. It was a little difficult to deal with all that at her age.

Zhao Jie smirked. He actually didn't mind acting as her benefactor, but the young lady didn't seem to appreciate his intention.

Today he'd asked her whether she wanted to bully back. He had initially been thinking of assisting her, but she'd looked at him with a face full of suspicion, clearly showing she didn't trust him. She would rather rely on herself than ask him for help. Why was that? Was he really so untrustworthy? Zhao Jie was ruminating distractedly while touching his wrist.

Empress Chen spoke a few more words in addition, but Zhao Jie was too absorbed in his thoughts, so she didn't know whether he'd heard anything.

"Chang Sheng." The empress helplessly called out to him.

Zhao Jie paused, then looked up to ask: "What did mother empress say?"

Realizing at once that he hadn't been listening properly, the empress had to repeat herself: "Danyang looked for me earlier to complain. She said you were too careless toward her..."

His face remained expressionless. He'd already expected that Gao Danyang would come and complain to the empress. As for why he was said to be careless, he didn't need to think too hard to know the reason. It was nothing else but his wish to give away her cat that made her unhappy, so she'd rushed over here to protest, hoping that the empress would speak to him. He had gotten sick of dealing with such things for the past two years, so he'd long developed a selective listening ability.

Empress Chen intended to play matchmaker to him and Gao Danyang. She would daily mention the girl's name in front of him. Gao Danyang was his maternal cousin, and the empress didn't mind changing from an aunt to a mother-in-law. And as the two of them were quickly growing into adults, the sooner this matter was settled, the sooner she would feel relieved. However, he was already bored of hearing this. If he wasn't interested in a person, forcing them on him would only make him lose interest even more.

After a while, he interrupted Empress Chen's words and stood up saying: "There are some matters that need my attention at my residence. If mother empress is done speaking, I'll go back first."

Empress Chen had no other choice but to stop. Knowing he didn't like listening to these things, she grudgingly waved him away, "Go then, go. As for these so-called matters of yours, I can see they're just an excuse."

Zhao Jie smiled, not denying her statement. After he bid her goodbye, he stepped out of Zhaoyang hall.

He didn't see Gao Danyang as a woman, simply regarding her as an ordinary cousin. If they forced him to marry her, it would only cause harm to both parties. Moreover, he currently had no plans of

marrying. It was too soon to think of that. Rather than romance, he had more important issues.

Between love and power, some people would naturally prefer the latter.

\*

Once Zhao Jie left, Empress Chen sat down again and asked Nurse Qiu about Wei Luo.

After all, it concerned the study partner of her own daughter. She couldn't be careless, everything had to be thoroughly inspected.

Nurse Qiu thought about it, then spoke about today's event of Wei Luo pushing Li Song into the water. She wasn't present at the time, but she'd heard people talking about it. In order to even the score for her younger brother, the fourth miss of Duke Ying's house had requested to push Prince Ruyang's son into the water as well. After that, no one knew why, but Prince Ruyang's son had nearly drowned, sinking to the bottom of the lake. Fortunately, he'd been saved quickly, so nothing big happened.

Empress Chen had a straightforward and resolute personality. Though spending so many years in the Emperor's court had sharpened her edge, her innate character had remained the same. She laughed out loud as she listened, gaining a new impression of this fourth Miss. She hadn't heard such an interesting story for a long time. "So she got what she wanted, but what about Prince Ruyang?"

She knew that Li Zhiliang loved his son the most. Even if he looked rough, he was ferociously protective.

Nurse Qiu also smiled and said as she tucked her hands in: "It goes without saying, he wasn't willing to let her do it. However, his son himself had agreed, and Prince Ruyang hadn't opposed to it either. Afterwards, there was His Highness Prince Jing to act as a

witness. Even if he wanted to take it back, he wouldn't be able to. I heard Prince Ruyang's face was green at the time..."

Empress Chen took a handkerchief to wipe away the tears from the corners of her eyes. It had been ages since she'd last laughed like this. Back when Zhao Qin (\*probably the emperor's name) had gone to battle in Wurong, she was the deputy general, while Li Zhiliang was the vanguard. The two of them didn't get along, often disagreeing with each other. At that time she had found Li Zhiliang very displeasing. If it wasn't for Zhao Qin's sake, she would have already dropped all civility with him. Now that she learned he had suffered defeat in a little girl's hands, how could she not rejoice?

At this moment, even though she hadn't yet met Wei Luo, she already had a favorable impression of her.

Empress Chen finally stopped laughing, then said to Nurse Qiu: "Go find Tutor Chang and tell him that Liuli will attend classes with a study partner. Ask him to prepare one more seat." Thinking of something else, she added an instruction: "Go to Duke Ying's place tomorrow and pass down this Empress' Imperial decree. Tell them my wish is to let Duke Ying's fourth Miss become Princess Tianji's study partner."

Nurse Qiu hurriedly wrote her words down. After waiting for Empress Chen to retire to her quarters, she immediately left Zhaoyang hall to carry out her orders.

\*

After the Imperial decree reached Duke Ying's house, Wei Kun was utterly shocked. The rest of the family also found this incredible.

The Empress had never even seen Wei Luo's face. Why would she personally grant her entry to the palace as a study companion?

However, the facts stood before their eyes, so they had to believe it. When Nurse Qiu finished relaying the information, she

returned to the palace. Before leaving, she requested that Wei Luo accompany Princess Tianji to class the next day. When the time came, the palace would arrange a special carriage for her.

Wei Kun sent off Nurse Qiu, then went to Wei Luo's room to personally tell her what had happened. Smiling from ear to ear, he rubbed her head. "Did Ah Luo meet the Empress yesterday? What did you say to her?"

Wei Luo was confused herself. She had never met Empress Chen. She had only met Princess Tianji and had said a few words to her. Could it be that they wanted her to enter the palace as a study partner just because of this? Wasn't that too reckless? Or did Princess Tianji ask the Empress to let Wei Luo enter the palace to teach her how to kick the shuttlecock? It wasn't impossible. Judging by how much Empress Chen doted on Princess Tianji, it was absolutely possible she'd agree.

Duke Ying's family didn't have many connections to the Imperial household. There wasn't an Imperial concubine originating from their clan, either. Thus, Wei Luo being able to gain entry to the palace as Princess Tianji's study companion was actually setting down a precedent. Later that afternoon, Wei Luo went to Mrs. Han and told her about this matter. Mrs. Han would temporarily teach her some court etiquette, so she could avoid making mistakes later.

There were various customs in the palace and speaking to anyone required discretion. It couldn't be taught in a short time. When she saw Wei Luo straining to listen, Mrs. Han pinched her cheek with a laugh, saying: "Enough. You're young, you don't need to study these many rules. Just remember to behave, don't act willfully."

Wei Luo nodded with some uncertainty.

The next day, Wei Luo changed into a brand new cherry colored brocade dress with peony patterns. Her hair was styled in two buns as usual. Wei Kun personally lifted her to sit in the Imperial carriage. An old Nurse was already sitting inside. The old Nurse



put on a serious face and didn't speak a word during their trip.

An ordinary child would have gotten scared in such a situation, but Wei Luo wasn't a genuine six year old after all. Her soul was 15 years old. She felt a little curious, but not afraid. Mrs. Han told her what she'd have to do as a study companion. It was nothing more than attending classes together and playing with the princess. It was very simple. She had to attend classes at home anyway, it was just that the location had changed.

The carriage stopped at the entrance of the Imperial palace, and Wei Luo followed the Nurse to get down.

The inside of the Imperial palace was grand and luxurious. The great lake she had gone to yesterday was only a tiny sample. Furthermore, there were many areas she hadn't yet seen. Since the Nurse didn't speak, Wei Luo couldn't help but ask: "Where are we going now?"

The Nurse wearing a silver colored dress finally opened her mouth: "The First study room."\*

The First study room was a place made especially for the little princes and princesses to attend classes. There was a stipulation within the palace – as long as they reached six years of age, they had to go to the First study room and listen to the tutor. Classes started early in the morning, but she was just arriving now. The others were surely already in the middle of a lecture... Wei Luo felt apprehensive at heart, but she couldn't say anything. She understood that the Nurse had definitely received instructions from the Empress, so even if she said anything, it would be useless.

The two of them went past the palace gate and through a long corridor, and finally reached the outside of the First study room.

Even from afar, they could hear multiple voices reading out loud. The tutor read out a sentence, then the young princes and princesses sitting below neatly repeated after him. The Nurse had spoken to tutor Chang in advance, so she directly led Wei Luo to

knock on the door, then pushed it open and entered inside. With the warm sunlight illuminating them from behind, they appeared in the gathered people's view.

All noise suddenly came to a halt within the study room, as everyone's sight fell on the little girl behind the Nurse.

The young girl's appearance was beautiful, with cherry lips and white teeth, delicate and adorable. Not expecting to see so many people in the room, she stood in a daze, her large glistening eyes blinking repeatedly. She couldn't recover her composure for quite a while.

The Nurse had already explained Wei Luo's situation to tutor Chang, arranging for a seat next to Princess Tianji. The tutor was advanced in age and his mood wasn't easy to fluctuate. He was actually very calm. After the Nurse left, he simply introduced Wei Luo, then made her sit down.

There was a new black lacquered desk with spiral carvings in gold, that was specially prepared for her.

Zhao Liuli greeted her with a beaming smile, her eyes shining. "Ah Luo, I'm here." Today she was wearing a green short coat with a floral pattern, matched with an embroidered yellow skirt. Compared to yesterday, she seemed more energetic.

That was certainly thanks to Wei Luo. As she knew that Wei Luo would come as her study partner today, she was very happy, so her complexion was also good.

The princes and princesses knew the children in their generation by face. They were just a little surprised when they saw Wei Luo come in, but after they learned she was Zhao Liuli's study companion, their expressions returned to normal as they went on with the reading exercise. The oldest prince in the study room wasn't more than 13. Everyone had a reading companion by their side, who were either some high official's child, or came from an esteemed family. It was nothing unusual.

When Wei Luo sat down, she sensed someone's angry gaze on her. Turning around to look, her eyes met with Li Song's.

Wei Luo stared blankly. She hadn't expected for him to also be here. Knitting her brows in a frown, she didn't bother concealing the loathing in her eyes.

She only glanced at him, then turned back around to start reading from "The Analects of Confucius", no longer paying any attention to him.

Li Song's indignation rose further. He hadn't even looked for her to take revenge, yet she was the one acting offended. He had been made fun of by her earlier, getting humiliated by sinking into the great lake, and even catching a cold later that night. He had never been so embarrassed before! It was all because of that stinky\* girl. Seeing her again today, he naturally wouldn't have a good expression. Glaring at the back of her head, he gave out a dark 'humph' as he couldn't find an outlet for his anger.

\*

Classes ended late in the afternoon. After that, the princesses could return home, while the princes had to go for military lessons, where they currently practiced archery.

Today was Wei Luo's first time accompanying Zhao Liuli to class, and she couldn't go back home yet. She had to visit the Zhaoyang hall in Qingxi palace and meet with Empress Chen first, before she would be allowed to leave.

Zhao Liuli pulled her along excitedly as they headed out, chattering while they walked, "Mother Empress wants to meet you very much. This morning she said that I must bring you to her..."

Wei Luo tilted her head. Under the sunlight, her small face appeared even fairer, and with her eyes curved in a smile, she looked sweet and lovely.

Yesterday she had made the same expression; smiling as she

pushed him in the water, then watching on emotionless while he was sinking. Staring at her back, Li Song pursed his lips, then suddenly picked up a bow. He took an arrow from the golden quiver, drew the bow and nocked the arrow, then aimed at Wei Luo's back and pulled the bowstring fully.

When he let go, the arrow left the string, flying towards Wei Luo's back...

By the time Zhao Liuli noticed, it was too late. Her eyes widened in shock and she called out, "Ah Luo!"

As Wei Luo turned her head, the arrow whizzed right past, almost grazing her face, then it struck the red lacquered pillar behind her.

## Chapter 25

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Li Song came to stand a few steps away, looking provocatively at her.

Since he was three, he'd been practicing martial arts with Prince Ruyang. Five years had passed. His archery and fighting techniques were naturally quite good. Now he used that to both retaliate against Wei Luo, and to show off. Seeing that the arrow had nearly scratched her cheek, he lowered the bow and slightly raised his chin, asking in a domineering manner, "How was it, is my archery good?"

Wei Luo's face was expressionless, but her eyes were cold and seemed to contain rage within.

When she didn't speak, Li Song felt even more pleased with himself. He'd finally vented his anger. "Are you scared?" He smirked and boasted shamelessly, "You can rest assured that my archery is excellent. It's absolutely impossible that I'll injure you."

He only wanted to frighten her and nothing else.

Wei Luo looked at him wordlessly for a moment, then turned around to hop onto the parapet in order to pull out the arrow from the red pillar. It wasn't embedded too deeply. She held her breath in and vigorously pulled twice before the arrow came out. No one knew what she wanted to do. Even Zhao Liuli was a little uneasy. "Ah Luo, what are you doing?"

Not saying anything, she jumped down and headed in Li Song's direction. As she stood in front of him, she extended her hand and raised her small face that was suddenly carrying a beautiful smile. "Big brother Li Song, your arrow."

Li Song was puzzled by her smile. What was with her reaction? Shouldn't she be angry?

Judging by the temper she had shown yesterday, she should have

retaliated maliciously, wasn't that right? Yet now she was smiling so adorably, it really surprised him. However, Li Song was well aware of a few things. Her father wasn't there to back her up, and the whole place was full of princes and princesses. Even if she was angry, she couldn't do anything about it. Moreover, he was still holding a bow.

Li Song considered his revenge complete. She wouldn't be violent against him anymore. Wasn't she currently admitting defeat to him?

He snorted and bent down to take the arrow from her hand. "Who's your big brother..."

He wasn't done speaking, when that small girl not only didn't give him the arrow, but leaped up and grabbed his shoulders, suddenly pushing him to the ground.

It was so abrupt that Li Song wasn't able to defend himself and fell straight to the ground. His eyes widened in astonishment, looking at the little girl sitting on his body. "You..."

Wei Luo raised the arrow and pointed it right at his eye. Her expression darkened as she swung her hand downwards...

Li Song was so shocked, he broke out in cold sweat and shut his eyes involuntarily. He even forgot to resist.

The young girl watched him with a face full of disgust. It wasn't just slight annoyance, but true hatred. At that moment, Li Song really believed she would stab him. He waited for a long time, but the pain never came. Finally getting the courage to slowly open his eyes, he looked up.

He only saw the golden arrowhead pointing at his eye, a mere inch away. Wei Luo raised her delicate pink lips in a smile, her sweet and soft milky voice repeating his earlier words, "Are you scared?"

Li Song felt he had received the greatest insult. He shoved Wei

Luo off his body and yelled out in shame and anger, “Get lost!”

Wei Luo wasn't as strong as him. He lifted her with ease and was about to throw her to the ground. Luckily, she was caught from behind by a pair of big hands at the last moment. The other party supported her from the back and carried her up. A clearly cold and displeased voice sounded from behind her, “When Prince Ruyang taught the young master archery, was it to let you bully little girls?”

\*

The princes and princesses who hadn't had the time to leave yet, had been looking on with great interest. When Wei Luo had thrust the arrow at Li Song, they had even wanted to clap their hands and cheer. Now that Zhao Jie had suddenly appeared, each of them kept silent as they lost their mood to watch a play. Leading their study companions along, they all departed.

Zhao Jie was several years older than them. Cold and arrogant, with a firm conduct and ruthless methods, he was extremely difficult to get close to. They were afraid of Zhao Jie and didn't dare to be rash in front of him. They even glanced at Li Song with sympathy as they left.

Li Song was the fifth prince, Zhao Zhang's study partner. The two of them were the same age, eight years old. Zhao Zhang hadn't come to the study room today. He had come alone. Since the rest of the princes had left, there was no one around to help him. He had to face the unhappy Zhao Jie by himself.

Li Song patted his clothes and stood up, glaring at Wei Luo. When he looked at Zhao Jie again, he immediately changed his attitude. Just like the others, he was also a little afraid of him, but he was spoiled by both Prince Ruyang and Princess Gaoyang. Even if he was afraid, he didn't let it show. Stubbornly refusing to admit his wrongs, he said, “I didn't bully her. I can control my arrow's direction very well. As long as she doesn't move around, it

definitely won't hit her."

What kind of an excuse was that?

Wei Luo hung onto Zhao Jie's shoulders as she rolled her eyes indignantly. He still dared say it was her fault? Should she have just waited quietly for him to shoot his arrow? She was not a target.

Wei Luo puffed up her cheeks. Seeing her angry expression, Zhao Jie felt like laughing. He didn't put her down and hugged her closer to his chest, somewhat reluctant to let go. Lowering his gaze at Li Song, he said: "This Prince's archery is not bad, either. Would you like to test it?"

Li Song's brows tensed. "Test how?"

Zhao Jie only smiled wordlessly as he turned around to walk out.

Almost a quarter of an hour later, they arrived at the enclosure where the princes practiced their martial arts. The place was vast, with abundantly growing fragrant grass and a flat terrain. It was a very suitable area for horseback archery. A row of practice targets stood on both sides of the enclosure. From time to time, an elegant figure would sweep past on his horse, pull his bowstring and accurately hit the center of the targets.

This was precisely the place, where the princes came to practice their archery after classes every day.

Though Emperor Chong Zhen ruled the country, he never forgot the glory of the battlefield. On one hand, he required the princes to study the four books and five classics, and on the other hand, he expected them to practice martial arts for a strong and healthy body. Even if they ended up not needing it in the future, a strong and healthy body was always good to have. Thus all of Emperor Chong Zhen's eleven sons had to be well-versed in both the pen and the sword.

Li Song looked confused at Zhao Jie: "Why did (maternal) cousin



bring me here?”

Could it be to compare their archery?

Zhao Jie moved toward one of the targets and stopped within shooting range. The sapphire blue brocade robe with persimmon stem patterns fluttered in the wind. He folded one hand behind his back and pointed the other at the target, speaking indifferently, “Tie the young master on it.”

Li Song’s eyes turned round in shock.

Zhu Geng and Yang Hao obeyed his command and took hold of Li Song’s arms to drag him over. Disregarding his struggling, the two of them swiftly tied up his hands and feet and secured him onto the target.

When Li Song didn’t manage to break free, he clenched his teeth in anger: “Cousin Prince Jing!”

He finally started getting frightened. Zhao Jie’s behavior was too unpredictable. Li Song thought he intended to compare their archery skills, but didn’t expect him to completely ignore him and get him tied on a target. What did he want to do? When did he provoke him?

Standing a dozen paces away, Zhao Jie took a bull horn shaped bow from Zhu Geng’s hands. He ignored Li Song’s yell while testing the bow string’s elasticity. After a long while, he raised his eyes and glanced at him with a faint smile. “Didn’t you say earlier that you can control the arrow’s direction very well? As long as one doesn’t move around, they certainly won’t get shot?”

Li Song was speechless. He suddenly got a bad premonition.

Sure enough, Zhao Jie’s next words were: “This Prince will also shoot an arrow at you now. Don’t move around. Let’s see whether it’ll go without incident.”

Li Song’s complexion immediately turned white.

Even if Zhao Jie's archery was good, who would actually volunteer to stand there acting as a target? Let alone he was only an eight year old child. He was scared stiff. His knees had turned soft, yet his mouth still wanted to keep up a bravado, "You don't have to tie me up. I won't move around. My dad said your archery was..."

He wasn't done speaking when he saw Zhao Jie beckon with his hand at the girl in a cherry colored dress next to him, "Ah Luo, come over."

Li Song: "....."

Their activity attracted many gazes from the people within the enclosure, who gradually stopped their practice to take a look.

Wei Luo walked over to Zhao Jie's front. Her small steamed bun face was creased as she spoke with a childish voice, "I can't shoot arrows."

In the beginning, she didn't understand Zhao Jie's intentions, but right now it was obvious. He was helping her vent her anger. But why was he helping her? She couldn't make sense of it, but now was not the time to ponder over it. Li Song wasn't worth her sympathy anyway. Since someone was giving her the chance to teach him a lesson, she would be glad to take it.

Zhao Jie's lips formed a smirk. Standing behind her, he bent down and gave her the bow, then gripped her hand to guide her personally. With his hands over hers, he placed an arrow at the bow and aimed it at Li Song, who was on the nearby target. Right next to her ear, he asked, "Do you see it clearly?"

Wei Luo looked straight ahead at Li Song, who was already speechless with fear. Both scared and indignant, he was glaring at them with a pale face and clenched jaws.

Wei Luo was just about to say something when Zhao Jie suddenly released her hand. The arrow shot out of the bow speedily.

It whizzed through the air, producing a sharp sound as it struck the bull's eye beside Li Song's ear.

Li Song barely caught up to what had happened, when his body lost all of its strength. His forehead broke out in cold sweat. He didn't even have the strength to get angry. Until Zhu Geng and Yang Hao untied and brought him away from the target, his heart was still beating like a drum. The lingering fear hadn't vanished yet.

It was almost certain that he wouldn't think of touching the bow again for a very long time in the future.

\*

Zhao Jie didn't immediately lead Wei Luo out of the palace, but brought her to Zhaoyang hall first.

Zhao Liuli had returned ahead of them due to her poor health, and had already waited for quite a while inside. She wasn't able to witness the earlier events, so she wanted Wei Luo to tell her all about it. But since Wei Luo was in the middle of meeting with Empress Chen, she couldn't attend to Zhao Liuli.

Empress Chen was sitting on the ebony wood arhat bed. Seeing Wei Luo for the first time, she patted the soft seat next to her in a friendly manner. "You're Wei Luo? Come, let Me have a good look."

Wei Luo called out, "Empress." Her tone was well-mannered and gentle, with the typical sweetness of a young girl. Anyone who heard it would soften up a little. Empress Chen made Nurse Qiu carry the girl up and earnestly looked her all over. She gave her sincere praises: "That old man Duke Ying is truly blessed. His granddaughter is this good-looking."

Before meeting Wei Luo, she had believed that Princess Gaoyang's daughter, Li Xiang, was the most exquisite. After her were Gao Danyang and Gao Qingyang. But now that she had seen

Wei Luo, she felt that they couldn't compare to her at all. The young girl's face looked like a crafted porcelain doll. Each feature was perfect – cheeks like white jade, a cute nose and clever eyes. Who knew how stunning she would grow up to be some day.

Empress Chen inspected her closely. The more she looked, the more she felt it was fate. That pair of large eyes were brimming with intelligence, clear and bright like a fresh spring able to cleanse a person's sins. Empress Chen stroked her head and said with a smile, "Good child, I've heard about you. I haven't told you that I let you enter the palace as a study partner because I wanted you to keep Liuli company. She doesn't have any playmates in the palace and is quite lonely. When you get closer later, you'll be her best friend."

While Empress Chen was sizing Wei Luo up, Wei Luo was also quietly observing her.

Wei Luo had been curious about her for a long time. She was the most honored woman in Daliang, yet she had ultimately chosen such a way to leave this world, unwilling to yield to Emperor Chong Zhen. Wei Luo slightly lowered her head. "I'll carefully look after Liuli."

Empress Chen was very pleased with her and held her back to have dinner together. By the time Wei Luo came out of Zhaoyang hall, the sun had set in the west as it was close to seven in the evening.

Empress Chen considered for a while. The sky was dark and it wouldn't be safe for Wei Luo to return alone. Thus she spoke to Zhao Jie, who was sitting on the tutor chair, "Chang Sheng, didn't you also want to go back to your residence? I remember Prince Jing's residence and Duke Ying's place are in the same direction. Why don't you drop off the fourth Miss home."

## Chapter 26

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Prince Jing's residence was situated at the end of the East main street, while Duke Ying's residence was at the mid section. It was just enough to say it's on the way.

Since it was the Empress' suggestion, there was no reason to reject. Zhao Jie put down the green jade cup with a hornless dragon pattern and got up to leave. Cupping his hands in greeting to the empress, he said, "Your son is bidding goodbye. The time is late, Imperial mother should also take a rest."

Empress Chen nodded, ordering Nurse Qiu to escort them to the gate of Qingxi palace.

Outside the palace was parked the prince's green-roofed carriage. The exterior was low-key, but the interior was extravagantly gorgeous. Wei Luo stepped on the black lacquered redwood foothold, lifted open the hanging screen embroidered with gold, and lowered her body to go in. Right in the middle of the carriage was placed a small purple table lined with gold and carved with a scenic design. On top of it were arranged several kinds of fruit and snacks, including the plums and peaches that were in season. There were also walnuts, almonds and other nuts. Wei Luo glanced at Zhao Jie, who entered after her, and thought he really knew how to enjoy life. It was merely the inside of a carriage, yet it was decorated so exquisitely. Enough to see that he put care into his way of life.

A person with such deep thoughts, who never let his emotions show, why had he helped her today?

The carriage started moving, gradually leaving the palace behind.

No matter how she thought, Wei Luo couldn't understand. Propping up her cheek, she stared at the walnuts in front of her. Her pink lips pursed, she had an absent-minded expression. Zhao Jie's actions today would no doubt offend Prince Ruyang. Prince

Ruyang held the military power in his hands and his military service was illustrious. He was a very advantageous chess piece. Why didn't Zhao Jie want him? Pondering over it, her brain suddenly received an inspiration. She recalled something.

Li Song was Zhao Zhang's study partner. Was Prince Ruyang planning to support Zhao Zhang?

Thinking this far, it seemed to make sense. She dug into her previous life's memories. What had Prince Ruyang done to assist Zhao Zhang? Had he already made his intentions clear at this point in time? No wonder Zhao Jie wanted to start with Li Song. He had basically used the chance to provoke Prince Ruyang. Unable to grasp the chess piece, might as well destroy it. Death ended all problems.

Wei Luo finally figured it out. In the first place, he hadn't done it to help her, but because it was a good opportunity to give Prince Ruyang a warning.

The little girl was sitting straight on the soft seat, her eyelashes hanging low and obscuring her expression. Her lips were pursed at one point, then she suddenly got enlightened at another. When she was done thinking, her pair of glittery dark eyes brightened up, making her small face appear much more lively.

Zhao Jie couldn't help thinking back to what he had witnessed her do earlier today. She had sat on Li Song. He was standing behind her, so he couldn't see her expression. He could only see her raising the arrow and thrusting it toward Li Song's eyes without the slightest hesitation. Her tiny body seemed to contain tremendous power. Right then, he had believed that Li Song would undoubtedly die. He hadn't expected her to actually stop at the last moment.

She had asked whether Li Song was scared. Her voice had been soft, with a hint of satire.

Zhao Jie found it very entertaining. The reason he had made his

subordinates tie Li Song on the target was indeed to issue a warning to Prince Ruyang. But it was also in order to let her vent her anger. She was only six years old, yet she could be this outrageous and wild. If there was someone to indulge her and add fuel to the fire, who knew what kind of a huge commotion she would cause.

Zhao Jie noticed that she was staring at the walnuts on the white glazed plate with a flower design. Assuming she wanted to eat them, he took two in his hand to break them open, then peeled one piece. Seeing that Wei Luo still carried a heavily worried appearance, he couldn't help but smile. He held the piece of walnut to her mouth. "Open up."

What Wei Luo was actually thinking about was Prince Ruyang's actions in her past life. Had he assisted Zhao Zhang in seizing the throne? Those were palace secrets. The rumors among the common folk weren't many. She only remembered that Zhao Jie made Li Zhiliang's life miserable afterward. Let alone stripping him of his military power, he sent him away to Mount Changbai to serve as an official. That place was bitterly cold, constantly covered in snow. Li Zhiliang had most likely suffered a lot there.

It seemed that it was important to side with the right people.

Wei Luo's mind worked quickly, deciding to assess the situation another time. She was about to take a look whether they were getting close to her home, when a well peeled walnut suddenly appeared in front of her. It was a fresh walnut. After having the skin peeled, it revealed the clean white meat inside. The taste was both sweet and fragrant. She automatically opened her mouth and ate it from Zhao Jie's hand. Raising her head toward him, she smiled sweetly, "Thank you, big brother Prince Jing."

Zhao Jie withdrew his hand and put the remaining pieces on the small table. Crossing his legs, he propped up his chin and looked at her. "What were you thinking about just now?"

Usually, he wouldn't find it worthwhile asking a little girl such a question. What would a small child think about? Nothing other than eating, drinking, and playing. But she was different. She was full of surprises. All sorts of strange and unusual ideas filled her mind, making him curious for the first time.

Wei Luo naturally couldn't tell him she had been reminiscing over her past life. Thinking the fresh walnut was delicious, she picked up another one of the pile he had prepared and immersed herself into peeling it, "Big brother Prince Jing shot an arrow at Li Song. After Li Song goes back, he'll tell his daddy. Won't his daddy get angry?"

Zhao Jie raised an eyebrow a little surprised. He hadn't expected her to consider that far.

As for her question, so what? His goal was to anger Prince Ruyang. If he didn't anger him, he would be disappointed instead.

Zhao Jie chuckled and looked away, "With This Prince around, what can he do?"

\*

The carriage slowly reached the front gate of Duke Ying's residence. Dusk had already settled over the horizon, with only a bit of remaining light lingering in the west and illuminating the capital's streets.

Zhao Jie hugged Wei Luo to bring her out of the carriage. He rubbed her lips, picking up walnut peels from the corner of her mouth, and teased her, "Eat less walnuts, so you won't swallow your other incisor."

Wei Luo knew he was joking at her expense. Puffing up her cheeks, she couldn't help retorting, "Big brother definitely hasn't had his front teeth fall off in childhood. Or else why would you always mock me?"

Done speaking, she turned around to walk.



Zhao Jie chuckled quietly. Could it be that the little girl got angry? He wasn't trying to embarrass her on purpose, but seeing her tooth gap, he couldn't stop himself from wanting to tease her. Who made her reactions so amusing, causing him to laugh.

Zhao Jie was just about to board the carriage, when he saw a youngster dressed in an indigo brocade robe standing by the gate. With a tall stature and a handsome face, he looked as gentle as the wind.

Wei Luo caught sight of Song Hui as she walked over to the entrance. She opened her mouth in astonishment. What was he doing here so late? "Big brother Song Hui?"

Though he had most likely waited at the gate for a long time, he still smiled as he carried her up in his arms. "Why is Ah Luo coming back so late?"

He had heard today that Wei Luo was to enter the palace as a study companion to Princess Tianji, so he rushed over to meet with her. He hadn't anticipated to wait for over four hours before she returned from the palace. Right when he was prepared to go back and visit another day, he saw a carriage making its way toward him. It was actually Prince Jing personally sending her home.

Song Hui performed a greeting to Zhao Jie, then entered the residence with Wei Luo in his arms.

Wei Luo's bones were light and she didn't have a lot of meat on her bones. Carrying her wasn't a difficult task. Song Hui walked easy and relaxed, holding her as he reached Pine courtyard in a breath. He put her down on a small embroidered chair with marble lion carvings inside the main room and carefully asked, "Did you have dinner in the palace?"

Wei Luo nodded with a smile on her small face, replying obediently, "Yes, the Empress made me stay for dinner. That's why I'm back this late."

Not long after, Wei Kun and Changhong also came, expressing gratitude to Song Hui, then lead Wei Luo away to wash up and change her clothes.

Seeing that she was fine, Song Hui didn't stay any longer. After bidding goodbye to Wei Kun, he went back home.

From then on, Wei Luo started going to class every day. The palace classes followed a certain custom – five days were spent on studying and two days on resting, while the teacher arranged the schoolwork that they had to complete for the next day. Wei Luo didn't only gain knowledge, she was also developing her relationship with Zhao Liuli more and more. Each time classes were over, Zhao Liuli would make her stay back to practice writing together. Once they were done practicing, they would work on the schoolwork given by the teacher before she would let her go home.

The days in the classroom were very peaceful, like the flowing water of a river.

Why were they peaceful like that?

Because ever since Zhao Jie tied him up on a target and shot an arrow at him, Li Song didn't show up to class even once. He didn't come, and the fifth prince Zhao Zhang didn't come, either. Since the two of them weren't there to cause mischief, it was naturally quiet.

\*

The 7<sup>th</sup> of August was Jiang Miaolan's death anniversary. Wei Luo informed Empress Chen, as well as Tutor Chang, and took a day off to go out of the city with Changhong. They were going to sweep the grave and present offerings to Jiang Miaolan in Qingshui mountain.

Wei Luo didn't hold much of a sentiment toward Jiang Miaolan and didn't intend to go initially, but Wei Kun wanted her to go. Moreover, he had specially requested for Song Hui to lead the two

of them there.

Wei Kun himself didn't go. For so many years, he had never gone to see Jiang Miaolan's tombstone, evading the problem and unwilling to face it whatsoever.

Duke Ying residence's carriage took them up the mountainside. Wei Luo had already come to this place in her childhood, so she wasn't too impressed now. Holding Changhong's hand, they arrived in front of the grave. Without anything good to say, she casually paid her respects and burned some paper money. Not even a single teardrop managed to squeeze out of her eyes.

On the road back, the two little guys' mood wasn't good. Believing they were thinking of their mother, Song Hui felt sorry for them and asked with a smile, "When we return inside the city, big brother Song Hui will buy you each a sugar figure, alright?"

Changhong wasn't interested, not giving him any face, "I don't want it."

Song Hui didn't get angry, only smiling as he asked, "Then what do you want? Candied fruit?"

Changhong ignored him and grasped Wei Luo's hand as he spoke, "Ah Luo, I want to eat cool cake."

Wei Luo fixed her gloomy expression and nodded with a beaming smile, "Okay, I'll eat whatever you eat."

The carriage quickly reached the city, passed through the moat, then went through the gates. They were met with a lively and prosperous sight. Having arrived at the center, Song Hui told the driver to park beside the street. He helped Wei Luo and Changhong down the carriage, then took them to the opposite tea shack to eat cool cakes.

Although there was nothing special about that place, its cool cakes were the most famous within the city. Sweet yet not greasy, they had a refreshing taste. There were many people who admired

them and stopped by daily.

Song Hui wished to let the children cheer up, and wasn't in a hurry to bring them back home. When they were done eating the cakes, he lead them to a nearby stall to buy dough figurines. Jin Lu and Jin Wu followed behind. In the back with them were also the guards of Count Zhongyi's residence, insuring their safety. According to Wei Luo's appearance, the craftsman kneaded a figurine of a little girl in a butterfly patterned dress. It looked lifelike and exactly the same as Wei Luo, including the dimples on her face when she smiled.

Taking the dough figurine, Wei Luo carefully scrutinized it, clearly very fond of it. She was right about to let Changhong have a look, when she turned her head and unexpectedly saw a familiar silhouette.

It was namely the person she'd met last time on the streets – Lin Huilian.

She was still dressed the same way, with a silver hairpin in her hair and an apricot yellow short jacket. She wasn't carrying the wicker basket today. It seemed that she hadn't come to sell her silk flowers... But what surprised Wei Luo wasn't that. It was the person with her – the young woman who had helped her escape from Longshou village in her past life.

That time, she had been nearly buried alive by the Lin Huilian couple. She had fled under the cover of the night and had come across the village's orphan girl Ah Dai on the road. Ah Dai didn't have a family name. She lived alone outside the village, freely coming and going. Almost no one paid her any attention. If it hadn't been for Ah Dai's assistance, she simply wouldn't have been able to break away from the couple's pursuit.

Why was Ah Dai walking with Lin Huilian now? Not only that, but they seemed as close as a mother and a daughter...

Mother and daughter!

Wei Luo was startled by her own idea.

Could it be that since they weren't able to adopt her in this life, they had adopted Ah Dai instead? Ah Dai was seven years older than her. She would be 13 now. When Ah Luo was 15, they had tried to wed her to their dead son. If they had changed their target to Ah Dai, then only two years remained...

Wei Luo couldn't handle the thought. She wanted to step forward and take a closer look to make sure she hadn't seen wrong.

Lin Huilian's figure was getting further away. Wei Luo didn't manage to take more than two steps, before someone's body suddenly rushed in front of her, blocking her way.

She looked up. The person opposite her looked wild and unreasonable, with an arrogant expression. Who could it be if not Li Song?

## Chapter 27

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Wei Luo turning left, he also turned left; Wei Luo turning right, he immediately moved right.

Was he doing it on purpose?

Wei Luo raised her head and glowered at him. She didn't have time to waste with him here. Lin Huilian was about to disappear into the distance while he was blocking her way. Feeling anxious, she lashed out, "Step aside!"

The little girl's viciousness was quite formidable. Her pair of big eyes were open widely as she glared at him as if she wanted to eat him. But Li Song had deliberately come to oppose her. If she wanted him to step aside, he definitely wouldn't. Did she believe everything was over because he hadn't yet looked for her to settle their accounts over the other day's matters?

He'd never received such a huge insult in his whole life. Zhao Jie and her had joined hands to humiliate him in front everyone, he naturally hated the both of them. There was no opportunity to trouble Zhao Jie, but encountering Wei Luo on the street now, of course he wouldn't let her off. When he saw her holding a little dough figurine that looked exactly like her, he couldn't help frowning. Snatching it from her, he threw it on the ground. "Ugly girl, this young master won't step aside. What can you do about it?"

As dough figurines were essentially fragile, getting thrown on the ground twisted its shape right away, so that it didn't have its previous smiling expression.

Wei Luo fixedly stared at the fallen figurine, pursing up her rosy lips without saying a word.

Lin Huilian had already disappeared into the crowd and Wei Luo couldn't find her again. She had no way to ascertain whether that

maiden was Ah Dai or not. If it hadn't been for Li Song suddenly jumping out to hinder her, things wouldn't have turned out like this. She clenched her teeth and raised her reddened eyes to glare at him. Li Song, whether it was in her previous life or her current one, was equally annoying.

Li Song was out with his younger sister. While his sister went to the building across to buy pastries with the maid, he alone stayed in the carriage. Being bored to death as he waited, he never expected to see that little girl Wei Luo when he lifted the curtain. Her smiling face as she chattered sweetly was especially dazzling. On what basis could she smile so happily, when he had suffered such a miserable humiliation? Unable to endure, Li Song stepped down from the carriage and deliberately obstructed her way, wanting to see her anxious.

He called her 'ugly girl' not because she was actually ugly, but because of her missing front tooth. Whenever she opened her mouth, the tooth gap became visible. It looked a little funny but it absolutely couldn't be called ugly. Li Song also didn't think much when he said 'ugly girl', but as he noticed Wei Luo's complexion turn white, he felt extremely accomplished.

Wishing to pour oil on the fire, he went on, "What are you glaring at? Everything I said was true..."

Who would've thought that Wei Luo would lift her hand to cover her eyes, her small mouth releasing a 'Wah' as she started crying without the slightest warning!

She was suddenly weeping. Just a moment ago she still had a vicious expression, yet her tears flowed at the blink of an eye. Her teardrops rolling down, soon her whole face was soaked. The tears slid down her cheeks, wetting the front of her clothes. With no sign of stopping, she called out as she cried, "Big brother... Big brother Song Hui..."

Li Song was dumbstruck. What was going on? Why was she

crying?

Not long after, Song Hui rushed over from the back, pushing his way through the crowd. He carried her up in his arms and used his sleeve to wipe her tears, as he asked her tenderly, “Why is Ah Luo crying? Who bullied you? Why did you suddenly run just now, big brother Song Hui almost lost you.”

When Wei Luo unexpectedly ran a moment ago, only Jin Lu and Jin Wu had managed to catch up with her. Song Hui and Changhong had only been a step too slow and they couldn’t find her form again. If she hadn’t cried so loudly while calling his name, he definitely wouldn’t have been able to find her this quickly.

Wei Luo was weeping sorrowfully, her small face covered in tears. Her pair of black eyes seemed even brighter with the sheen of moisture. She choked up as she pointed at Li Song, saying accusingly, “Big brother Song Hui, he threw away the dough figurine you gave me... He also called me ugly...”

Finished speaking, she hugged Song Hui’s neck and kept sobbing with a distressed appearance.

Song Hui’s gaze followed the direction she was pointing at, seeing Li Song, whose expression had turned unsightly, standing a few steps away. Li Song was clearly scared silly by Wei Luo’s abrupt crying.

Looking down, there really was a broken dough figurine lying on the ground.

The crying sounds attracted the attention of the passersby on the street, who gradually gathered around to look. One was an eight or nine year old little boy, the other was a six year old little girl. It was unnecessary to argue about who was right and who was wrong. Just a look was enough to know. Everyone focused on Li Song at once, condemnation clearly written within their eyes. Strong bullying the weak... How exactly did he bully her?



Obviously it was her bullying him!

Li Song was rooted to the spot, stubbornly staring at Song Hui. In the end, he wasn't willing to retreat.

Soon after, a maidservant led Li Xiang out of a building. Catching sight of the battle formation in the distance, she felt things weren't good, so she walked over to ask what was happening. She noted that the children in front were dressed in expensive clothes and their appearance was remarkable. It wouldn't be good to provoke them. First she placed Li Xiang in the carriage, then lowered her head to apologize to Wei Luo and Song Hui with an ingratiating expression. Finally, she offered to buy another dough figurine to Wei Luo.

Song Hui revealed a rare for him resentment, indifferently replying, "No need."

The maidservant had no choice but to repeatedly apologize again.

The crowd on the street was getting bigger and bigger. The maidservant didn't want to stay any longer, so she hurriedly took Li Song to return home. Before he entered the carriage, Li Song glanced back at Wei Luo. She had already ceased crying, her eyes clear and bright. Where was the grievous appearance from just now?

Carrying Wei Luo, who had snuggled at his neck, Song Hui turned around. She sensed Li Song's line of sight and raised her eyes toward him. With a blink, a victorious smile slowly materialized on her face. It looked cunning, as well as mocking. She wasn't the least bit worried if he discovered her transformation.

Li Song came to a realization at long last. Had she been pretending to begin with? She hadn't cried for real?

He only felt his vision darken. Annoying to death!

After the trip to Qingshui mountain, Wei Luo was very concerned over what she'd witnessed on the streets. If things were really as she suspected, the Lin Huilian couple would have probably adopted Ah Dai in this life. Would Ah Dai be her replacement and get buried alive?

It would've been nice if she could have taken a clear look. It was all Li Song's fault for butting in, interrupting her good deed. Thinking of it, Wei Luo's resentment for Li Song deepened even further.

Presently, Zhao Zhang wasn't attending classes. Apparently, he had gotten sick with smallpox and was currently recuperating in his own palace. Only his personal attendants could meet him. Since Li Song was the fifth prince's study partner, while the fifth prince wasn't there, he naturally didn't need to come, either. Because the two of them weren't in the First Study to stir up trouble, it was rather peaceful.

After the day's classes, Wei Luo and Zhao Liuli practiced writing in Chenhua hall. The two young ladies were sitting at opposite sides of the black low table with ivory engravings. Each of them was holding a goat's hair brush and copied the contents of 'The Analects of Confucius'. Wei Luo's letters were neat and delicate, with a somewhat fancy style. She always wrote very earnestly, but she was in a daze today. Thinking about Ah Dai and Lin Huilian's relation, she only wrote down two characters, then propped up her cheek as she looked outside and drifted off.

Zhao Liuli asked her what was wrong, but she didn't answer as she kept musing.

Before long, someone came through Chenhua hall's entrance. The palace maids bent their knees to salute and just as they opened their mouths to greet him, he raised a hand to stop them. He was wearing a navy blue lined brocade robe. On the belt around his waist hung jade ornaments with Kui carvings. When he walked, the two jade ornaments knocked into each other, producing a crisp

sound. The man already stood beside her, yet Wei Luo still had no response. He picked up the paper in front of her, that she had just written on, and commented with an unhurried and sweet voice: “The style is neat, and the handwriting is pretty. It’s only a little scattered, lacking some effort. Is this your writing?”

Wei Luo finally recollected herself and raised her head to meet Zhao Jie’s eyes, then nodded sluggishly.

# Chapter 28

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For a six year old girl, Wei Luo's writing could be considered beautiful enough.

But Zhao Jie was a person who always strove for perfection. Anything within his hands had to be perfect. He felt that Wei Luo's writing was too impatient and unsteady, thus he took the brush and wrote two characters beside hers. Lowering his head, he asked, "Did you see clearly how to write like this?"

Wei Luo stared at the two grand and steady-looking characters on top of the paper. Blinking, she stretched out a white and tender small finger and asked in a childish tone, "Why did big brother write my name?"

She didn't know many characters, but she could recognize her own name. The two characters Zhao Jie had written happened to be her name. These characters had many and varied strokes, that were complex and difficult to distinguish. If she hadn't learned them from the scholar in Longshou village in her previous life, she truly wouldn't have been able to recognize them.

Zhao Jie's thin lips raised in a smile. "Can you read them?"

She nodded earnestly and spoke convincingly, "Daddy taught me. Daddy said I should know my name."

Wei Kun was a successful candidate of the Imperial civil service exam and was currently holding office in the Imperial academy. It wasn't unusual that he would occasionally teach his daughter to write a little. Thus, Zhao Jie didn't suspect anything. He wrote down two characters, placed the goat hair brush on top of the white coral pen-holder, pressed the paper with a yellow stone paperweight carved into the shape of a strange beast, then asked curiously, "What do these two characters say?"

Zhao Jie.

Wei Luo couldn't understand his intention. Why did he write his own name? He wouldn't start seeking fault with her if she was able to read it, would he? Pondering over for a moment, she shook her head and said, "Ah Luo can't read them."

If she couldn't read them, then why did she take so long to answer?

Zhao Jie took a moment to carefully look over her tiny face's expression, but as he didn't notice anything out of the ordinary, he put away his ridiculous thoughts. Straightening up, he spoke to the two little girls, "Imperial mother said that the osmanthus flowers have recently started blooming in the rear garden. Liuli and Ah Luo can go play over there, then bring back several blossoms. Mother said she wanted to personally make an osmanthus egg soup for the two of you."

Although Empress Chen was a noble empress, she wasn't like the other Imperial consorts who never got their hands dirty. When she followed Emperor Chong Zhen in battle in Wurong, there wasn't much she hadn't done. Hunting, skinning, making a fire... She wasn't a canary raised inside a cage, she had her own way of living. Since she was young, she most liked eating her mother's personally made osmanthus egg soup. To this day, it remained in her memories. She wanted to let Liuli also taste this flavor. Because it was made by mother, it was much more delicious than the precious dishes prepared by the palace kitchen.

Furthermore, it wasn't suitable for Zhao Liuli's condition to always stay inside. It was best to often go out and take a walk, soaking in the sun and appreciating the flowers. The imperial physician had said that a good mood was beneficial for a fast recovery. Therefore Empress Chen came up with such a method, making Zhao Jie lead them to the rear garden for a stroll.

Zhao Jie had time today, so he didn't decline.

Zhao Liuli was overjoyed when she heard that. She jumped down

from the small purple bench lined in gold with scenery engravings and numerous cherry blossom patterns, and spoke as she pulled Wei Luo's hand, "Ah Luo, will you eat some osmanthus egg soup? The egg soup my Imperial mother makes is the best!"

A pampered young lady used to exotic delicacies and an extravagant lifestyle, eating a simple dish occasionally would make her feel that it was especially delicious. However, Wei Luo wasn't really interested. In her past life, there was an osmanthus tree in her family's backyard. Every time in August, when the osmanthus became fragrant, Lin Huilian would steam osmanthus egg soup for her. Mentioning the osmanthus now, she recalled the small backyard in Longshou village. She thought of those not too cheerful memories.

Wei Luo opened her mouth to refuse, "I don't..."

Zhao Liuli didn't give her the chance to decline, dragging her along to go out of Chenhua Hall. After exerting herself to catch up with Zhao Jie under the veranda, she asked anxiously, "Second elder brother, can Ah Luo also try Imperial mother's osmanthus egg soup?"

Zhao Jie paused and turned his head to glance at Wei Luo's awkward face, then said with a nod, "Of course she can."

Zhao Liuli was elated, immediately leading Wei Luo to the rear garden to pick osmanthus blossoms together. Wei Luo followed blindly behind her, her pink lips slightly pursed. She felt rather helpless.

\*

The rear garden was located at the northwest of the Great Lake, divided in an east and a west plot. The east plot was fully planted with sweet osmanthus, elms, pomegranates, and other trees, that were arranged quite casually. There was even a vegetable garden behind them, growing luffas, okra, grapes, and other tasty fruits and vegetables. Reportedly, that was all done by Empress Chen. As

she had put down her armor and resided deep in the harem, she sometimes truly had nothing to do. She couldn't once again don her armor and go into battle, so without a better option, she opened up a vegetable garden inside the palace. Coming by occasionally to fiddle around and plant things herself, could as well be regarded as a sort of way to relieve boredom.

At the time, Emperor Chong Zhen had unexpectedly complied with such an absurd request. Not only that, but he also found experts to manage the garden for her.

It was clear that their sentiments had been very good then. But who knew why they had arrived at their present condition.

Empress Chen was the youngest daughter of general Huaihua, with four older brothers above her. Each and every one of them was a general in Daliang, occupying important posts and grasping military power within their hands. Empress Chen's oldest brother was general Dingyuan. For years on end, he never returned to the capital as he guarded the borders. Her second brother was a navy commander in Fujian, controlling Fujian's army. He also rarely returned home. Her third and fourth brothers both held an office in the capital city Sheng's army. They had a good reputation, each of them a force to be reckoned with. In addition, her father – general Huaihua, followed the former emperor as they opened up new territory and expanded the land. Having fought on all frontiers, he was Daliang's outstanding hero. It was to the extent that their Chen House had already become a prominent aristocratic family in Sheng a dozen years later, their influence was overwhelming.

Was that the reason that Emperor Chong Zhen was getting more and more afraid of the Chen family? So he gradually grew cold toward Empress Chen and concentrated his favor on Noble Consort Ning?

Noble Consort Ning had a younger brother, who had passed this year's new exam as the top scorer in the military field. Emperor

Chong Zhen intended to place him in an important post in order to boost his own influence, replacing Empress Chen's oldest brother – Chen Yantong, in defending the border pass.

In a few years, the emperor would thoroughly take away Chen House's power.

Wei Luo pondered absent-mindedly, no wonder Empress Chen could not forgive him. Looking on helplessly as her own father and elder brothers lost their authority one by one, falling into defeat, dead or exiled. Who would feel good about it?

“Ah Luo!” Zhao Liuli suddenly called out to her, completely disrupting her train of thoughts. She pointed a big red pomegranate. “That pomegranate is so red. Let's pick it, okay?”

Wei Luo followed her gaze, finding a full round pomegranate hanging on the tree beside them. The surrounding pomegranate trees were still blooming, while this one actually bore fruit. It was really rare.

Unfortunately, the fruit was a little too high and the two kids were unable to reach it even if they stacked up on top of each other.

Zhao Jie was reading in the eight-sided pavilion nearby. His hands were holding a book – “Fayan Interpretations”, and he was basically oblivious to their antics over here. Zhao Liuli didn't dare ask her second elder brother for help, she could only make a palace maid climb up the tree and take down the fruit. The palace maid gingerly crawled on the tree and picked the pomegranate with great difficulty. Her hands got unsteady causing the fruit to slip from her palms and roll on the ground.

Raising the edge of her patterned skirt, Zhao Liuli was just about to go pick it up when a little girl in a satin dress with golden embroidery unexpectedly appeared in front of her, hurriedly picking up the big pomegranate. Turning around to face behind, she said with delight, “[Cousin Linlang](#), look, I picked a



pomegranate!”

Right behind her, a seven or eight year old girl showed up, coming out of the moon gate. Her hair was gathered in two buns, and she was wearing a coral colored dress embroidered with cloud patterns. Her looks were 40-50 percent similar to Zhao Liuli's. With clear eyes and white teeth, she had [a rosy and youthful face](#). That was Noble Consort Ning's daughter, Zhao Linlang. The one who picked up the pomegranate just now was Princess Gaoyang's daughter, Li Xiang. The two of them were originally playing in the opposite West plot. Who knew why they suddenly came over here, even snatching the pomegranate that Zhao Liuli had spent so much effort to get.

Zhao Liuli had a timid disposition. Even if others snatched her things, she couldn't raise her voice. Speaking in a low voice, she wanted to let them know, “That's mine...”

Unfortunately, the two girls didn't seem to hear her. Li Xiang turned her head, and as if she just saw her there, her delicate and charming little face showed surprise. “Cousin Liuli? How come you're also here?”

To most, Zhao Liuli was bed-ridden all year round, with her body in poor health. So it wasn't strange that Li Xiang would ask something like this, but the question embarrassed Zhao Liuli even further. Her face flushed as she stuttered, “I...I was playing with Ah Luo.”

Wei Luo, however, wasn't shy like her, neither was she able to submit to injustice like her. Her things were her own, why give them to others? She pointed to the palace maid, who still hadn't managed to climb down the tree, then pointed at the pomegranate within Li Xiang's hands. Blinking, she said, “That's what Liuli made someone pick for her, it's not for you two.”

Li Xiang had seen Wei Luo in the city and she was also aware of her identity. Wei Luo was the one who had continuously bullied

her big brother, causing him to fall ill. Seeing her now, she naturally didn't have a good mood. Li Xiang was highly reluctant to hand over the pomegranate. Her almond eyes glared spitefully at her. "Why should I believe your words?"

Normally, one pomegranate really wasn't worth arguing over. It was just a fresh fruit and nothing more. Their homes were full to the brim with treasures, they didn't lack for anything. But today, Li Xiang was determined to clash with Wei Luo. Wei Luo had bullied her big brother, so she wanted to vent some anger in his stead.

"Oh," Wei Luo uttered with a milky voice, deliberately stretching the sound for a while. She turned her head around to ask Zhao Liuli, "Liuli, did I say the truth just now?"

Zhao Liuli met her line of sight. If it was before, she would have already let the matter drop. But as she had Wei Luo to help her now, she had the courage to nod. "...Yes."

Since the princess herself said so, she didn't have a definitive argument anymore. Li Xiang pouted. Fuming, she stuffed the pomegranate in Wei Luo's hands, pushing her on purpose.

Wei Luo staggered two steps, barely steadying herself. Holding the pomegranate to her bosom, she didn't get angry. Her bright eyes narrowed in a smile as she said cheerfully, "Li Xiang?"

Li Xiang glanced at her and grudgingly asked, "What do you want?"

Wei Luo turned around and made her way back to Zhao Liuli's side. As she walked, she spoke leisurely, "There's a bug over your head."

Li Xiang paled, subconsciously raising her head to see a wiggling bug perched on the flowers. Right at that moment, it fell directly on her nose! Girls were all afraid of such soft wiggly things; the feeling of it crawling on the skin caused goosebumps. Li Xiang was

no exception. She was immediately scared to tears. The bug fell down from her nose, twisting and squirming on the ground. She found it extremely disgusting, so she promptly called a palace maid over to stomp it to death.

\*

Wei Luo and Zhao Liuli didn't go back, but went to the eight-sided pavilion where Zhao Jie was reading. They placed the pomegranate on the stone table and asked the palace maid to slice it open with a knife, then put it on a small white porcelain plate with golden winding lotus leaves engraving.

The bright red pomegranate seeds were full and juicy, but unfortunately, it was too early for the fruit to ripen. It wasn't sweet, but sour and a bit astringent instead. Wei Luo only ate several seeds then stopped. Tilting her head to look at the motionless Zhao Jie, she grabbed a pomegranate seed and asked, "Big brother, do you want to eat some pomegranate?"

She spoke aimlessly to begin with, but there was also a slight intention to tease him. She wanted to let him taste the sour pomegranate flavor. She didn't expect that without even lifting his head, he would turn his chin toward her and open his mouth. That posture obviously meant for her to feed him.

Wei Luo's hand paused in midair, hesitant to come down. Without a better option, she brought a pomegranate seed to his mouth. Shortly after withdrawing her hand, she secretly wiped it on her clothes behind her back.

That petty action naturally didn't escape Zhao Jie's eyes. He ignored it and kept his focus on "Fayan Interpretations" as before. After chewing, he spat out the seed and said with a gentle voice like a running stream of water, "Give me another one."

Wasn't it sour to him?

Wei Luo complained on the inside, but she was forced to feed him

another one.

It was as if he truly didn't think it was sour and astringent. Whenever he was done eating, he would call her to feed him again, absolutely unmindful of anything inappropriate about it. She wasn't his little maid. Wasn't there a palace maid right there! Why did he insist on making her feed him? Wei Luo pursed her lips and thought resentfully, even if she didn't find the pomegranate delicious, it didn't mean she wanted to feed him. Her hand was getting sore, yet he still wanted to eat?

Zhao Jie finally finished the last page of "Fayan Interpretations" and raised his head just in time to witness the little girl's bitter expression. He couldn't help chuckling. Leaning over, he rubbed her forehead and intentionally parted her bangs to caress the small red birthmark between her brows. "The grapes in the back are ripe, do you want to eat?"

Wei Luo glared at him, but she had no time to talk as Zhao Liuli hastily spoke from the side, "I want!"

Zhao Jie got up and said with a smile, "Let's go, I'll lead you two to pluck some grapes."

Not far behind the eight-sided pavilion, there really was a grape trellis with a bench built under the frame. It was suitable to enjoy the cool air and have a rest there. Bunches of big round red grapes were hanging from the trellis, plump and tempting.

Held by a palace maid, Zhao Liuli only needed to reach up to pick the grapes from above her. She didn't take the whole bunch, but rather plucked grape by grape, until she was content.

Looking on from below, Wei Luo's limpid eyes shone as she felt a little envious.

Zhao Jie was observing her at that moment. Seeing that she wanted to go up, he stooped down to support her small buttocks, then lifted her up from the ground and asked, "Which one do you

want to pick?”

Older female cousin from the maternal line, sigh...

朱顏綠發：It’s actually part of a poem, indicating it refers to a young child. Difficult to translate literally.

## Chapter 29

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Children's hands didn't have much strength. Without clippers, she was basically unable to pick a whole string of grapes. Wei Luo tried it twice unsuccessfully, then simply decided to eat what she picked directly while borrowing Zhao Jie's embrace. She aimed for the largest and roundest grape in the bunch and raised her short arms to seize it, successfully plucking it out. Just as she was about to put it in her mouth, she lowered her head to look at Zhao Jie's pair of eyes that were as deep as the ocean. Getting an idea, she appeared sensible as she stuffed the grape in his mouth. "Big brother eat it."

The fruits and vegetables that Empress Chen planted were very clean and there were usually people who attentively took care of the garden. Even without doing much, it was possible to eat straight away.

Actually, Zhao Jie was a picky person, he couldn't eat unwashed grapes. If he didn't want to, then don't eat, Wei Luo didn't care. No longer minding him, she started eating with relish. Before long, she was finished with half a string. When Zhao Jie put her down, she had already eaten to the full, her belly bulging out. Yet she still looked as if she could go on.

Zhao Jie laughingly told her, "Eating too much will make your belly hurt."

Wei Luo didn't believe his words initially, thinking he was envious and crying sour grapes because he couldn't eat them. Who would have expected that after eating the osmanthus egg soup personally made by Empress Chen, she had barely sat down in the carriage leading back to Duke Ying's residence, when her belly started hurting. The pain wasn't quick and violent, but grew gradually. It wasn't very severe at first, but by the time she reached home, her face was already covered in cold sweat and she was shivering all over from pain.

That really frightened Wei Kun and Changhong. Wei Kun hurriedly told a servant girl to invite a physician over. By the time the physician arrived, she was already throwing up and having diarrhea. Her small face was wan and her body seemed to have grown thinner in half a day.

Holding her slender wrist to diagnose her, the doctor said that it wasn't anything serious. Just that eating too much raw and cold fruit was harsh on the digestive system. Children's bodies were delicate. Even if they were bursting with energy normally, it was important to take care of those small details. While the doctor was lecturing, Wei Kun stood to the side, earnestly listening to him. Only when the doctor wrote down a prescription and left, he could finally sigh with relief.

Soon after, Jin Lu came in, carrying the prepared medicine. She helped Wei Luo drink it up, then asked worriedly, "Miss, what did you eat in the palace? Why did your belly get sick?"

Wei Luo weakly reclined into the big decorative pillow, her appearance ill and weary. She spoke dejectedly, "I ate grapes, ate too many."

As she replied, she couldn't help but recall Zhao Jie's earlier words. Her heart was complaining, he really had a jinxed mouth, what he said actually happened. Now that her belly truly was in pain, perhaps she wouldn't even be able to attend the morning classes, so they had to inform Empress Chen she would be taking several days off until her body recovered. Fortunately after drinking the medicine, she felt much better, no longer throwing up or running to the toilet. Some vigor also returned to her, it wasn't as bad as in the beginning.

When the old madam and the others heard the news, they rushed to visit in succession. Recently, Wei Luo was the most popular person in Duke Ying's family. Leaving aside the fact that she had entered the palace as princess Tianji's study companion, she had even entered Empress Chen's good graces. Every now and then,

Empress Chen would send small gifts toward the [fifth branch](#) of the family, making the several other branches endlessly envious.

The old Madam Luo had never been very fond of this granddaughter, possibly because her mother had been too unrestrained back in the past, stirring up her two sons to fight for her affection and causing them to fall out with each other. The two brothers were still on bad terms to this day. Usually, the old Madam was neither warm, nor cold toward Wei Luo and Changhong. Sometimes she would remember to show care and say a few words to them. It was far inferior to the love she showed to her other grandchildren. Now that Empress Chen had attached great importance to Wei Luo, her manner to Wei Luo had also changed a lot. Unlike the previous neglect, her face was all smiles whenever she met Wei Luo.

Wei Luo knew that the old madam didn't like her, so she also didn't try to be intimate with her. In this residence, the one she was closest to was her fourth aunt. Other than fourth aunt, everyone else was unimportant.

Her body was feeling weak. As she lay within the beddings, only her small face the size of a palm was revealed. Her large eyes shifted around, taking in the people encircling her bed. She paused when she reached Madam Qin. "Fourth aunt, stay with me..."

Madam Qin came closer, sat down on the bedside, then carefully tucked in a corner of the bedding as she hurriedly said, "Good, good, fourth aunt will stay behind to accompany you."

When the gathered people saw she was safe, they started leaving one by one. The room immediately became a lot more peaceful. Wei Luo was also tired right now. Closing her eyes, she was sound asleep in no time.

\*

Wei Luo was sick for three days already. During those three days, she hadn't gone to any classes.



The first two days Zhao Liuli could still endure, but by the third day she completely exploded. Nurse Qiu always deceived her by saying that Wei Luo would come to the palace the next day, but after waiting for two whole days, she still hadn't come. What if she never came back? Princess Tianji didn't have many friends, so she naturally placed a lot of importance on her. Although Nurse Qiu repeatedly tried to appease her, saying that Wei Luo had merely fallen sick and she would be back in the palace as soon as she got better, Zhao Liuli didn't listen.

Today Zhao Liuli had said that she wouldn't drink her medicine no matter what. Each time they fed it to her, she would spit it out. She insisted that as long as Wei Luo came, she would willingly take the medicine.

Heavens, it turned out that the fourth Miss of Duke Ying's house was a true miracle drug!

Nurse Qiu didn't dare to waste time, she rushed to Zhaoyang Hall to report to Empress Chen. It turned out that Zhao Jie and Gao Danyang were also there. Zhao Jie had come to pay respects to Empress Chen, while Gao Danyang had come to visit her maternal aunt, so they happened to bump into each other. Nurse Qiu recounted the matter and asked awkwardly, "Empress, what should we do?"

Empress Chen frowned and couldn't help but start to worry. "What is Ah Luo's condition? Can she enter the palace?"

Nurse Qiu said, "I'm afraid she cannot... Someone from Duke Ying's house came by this morning to pass on a message. It looks like the fourth Miss is still bed-ridden."

That was difficult to deal with. One couldn't enter the palace, the other didn't want to drink her medicine. It seriously made Empress Chen anxious to death.

Sitting on the round-backed wooden armchair beside them, Zhao Jie heard everything. His finger stroked along the edge of the cup

with colored chicken drawing as he asked, “Wei Luo has fallen ill?”

Empress Chen confirmed, then sat on the ebony arhat bed and spoke in quite a disconsolate mood, “The day before yesterday she was still very well, who knows how she suddenly fell ill. I heard that the sickness wasn’t light. She hasn’t been to class at all for the last two days.”

Zhao Jie controlled his expression and replied with an ‘Mhm’, seemingly deep in thought. Then he asked no further.

Sitting across from him, Gao Danyang heard Wei Luo’s name and couldn’t help but ask about her. “Aunt, are you talking about the fourth Miss of Duke Ying’s house, Wei Luo?”

Gao Danyang had especially dressed up today. A 13-14 year old maiden, just starting to develop, her looks were delicate; a charming and graceful beauty. She was wearing a pure white embroidered dress that showed off her tall figure, fine and exquisite. Part of her hair was rolled up in a bun, while the rest hung loose. A green jade hair pin with a pair of [mandarin ducks](#) was inserted by her temples. A decorative mark in the shape of a plum blossom was drawn between her brows, making her facial features appear even brighter and prettier, almost like a picture. However after seeing her, Zhao Jie couldn’t help but think of Wei Luo’s small red birthmark between her brows. That birthmark was hidden beneath her bangs and couldn’t be glimpsed normally. When the hair was pushed to the sides occasionally, people would notice it. And compared to the decorative marks, it was much more attractive.

Empress Chen nodded. “She’s Liuli’s study companion now... Why, are you acquainted?”

Gao Danyang shook her head, intentionally or otherwise turning to glance at Zhao Jie and nipping her cherry lips as she spoke, “Not acquainted, I’ve only heard about her.”

Did she want to talk about that thing with the cat? Zhao Jie

lowered his eyes and focused indifferently on the cup in his hand, as if he hadn't noticed her line of sight.

While on the subject, Empress Chen spoke about the day when Wei Luo had persuaded Zhao Liuli to take her medicine. Half way in the story, she called to mind that Zhao Liuli still hadn't drank the medicine. At this point, she had to stop and set forth for a trip to Chenhua Hall with Nurse Qiu, planning to personally coax her.

Gao Danyang really wasn't that interested in Wei Luo, but she had unwittingly incited Empress Chen a while ago, so she was forced to reluctantly listen to her with a smile. Now that the empress wanted to go Chenhua Hall, she also got up to accompany her. She would take a look at Zhao Liuli's situation on the way.

Gao Danyang intended to make Zhao Jie go as well, but he declined as he stood up from the chair, "I still have things to do. I'll come by again tomorrow and see Liuli."

Done speaking, he walked out the palace hall without even bothering to say goodbye to Gao Danyang. In a blink, he had already disappeared in the distance.

Gao Danyang pouted angrily as she stared at his back for a long time.

On his way out of the palace, Zhao Jie instructed Zhu Geng, who was behind him, while he walked, "Go to Duke Ying's residence and snoop around. Find out what the fourth Miss is sick with and when she'll be cured. If they need any medicine ingredients, there's plenty in this Prince's mansion."

Zhu Geng was slightly startled, but he very quickly complied with a 'Yes', and left the palace to handle his tasks.

\*

Duke Ying's residence.

Wei Luo's condition had improved a lot, but the first day of throwing up and diarrhea had been too terrible, it had sapped her

strength. After spending two days to recover at home, she was feeling much better. She reckoned she would be able to attend classes tomorrow.

She didn't know what was going on in the palace. At this moment, she had barely finished drinking her medicine. While she was practically speechless from its bitterness, Changhong came in from outside, clutching a small enamel case with lotus patterns. He presented it to her arms like a treasure. "Ah Luo, for you."

Very curious, Wei Luo asked while she opened it, "What is it?"

Changhong hadn't opened his mouth to reply yet, when she already saw the stuff inside. Lying inside were colorful and glossy round candies. The red ones had hawthorn stuffing, the yellow ones – tangerine, the purple ones – grape... They were also wrapped in a transparent sugar coating on the outside. They were as pretty as they were fragrant. Wei Luo caught one with hawthorn filling and threw it in her mouth. It was not only sweet, but also had the typical hawthorn sour taste. The combination of sweet and sour got rid of the bitter aftertaste inside her mouth. It was extremely delicious.

Wei Luo hadn't see these kinds of sweets around. Taking one to feed to Changhong, she asked, "Where did you find this?"

Changhong rarely showed a smiling expression. Since he looked handsome and refined, a smile really improved his overall impression. "Eldest brother went out today, so I went with him and bought this in town." Pausing a bit, he went on speaking like a small adult, "It's good if you like it."

Holding the small enamel box with both hands, Wei Luo's almond eyes narrowed in a smile. "I like it very much."

Changhong was aware she had to drink bitter medicine. That he would think of her while he went shopping left her really moved. Having only a small doubt, Wei Luo asked him where he got the money, but he said it was the New Year's spending money that Wei

Kun had given him before. Wei Luo was reassured by that.

After Changhong left, Wei Luo placed the box by the headboard. With this thing around, she was no longer afraid of drinking bitter medicine in the future. She could also bring it to the palace and let Zhao Liuli try a few, but not too many. It was the first time Changhong had gifted her something, so she felt it was a pity to eat too much of it.

Lost in daydreams, Wei Luo lied back down and fell asleep soon after.

Roughly around 5 pm, the Sun was setting in the West, gradually covering the courtyard in red rays. The maid Jin Lu pushed the door to walk into the room. On the purple tray in her hands was a bowl of yam congee. She woke Wei Luo up. "Miss, get up and eat the congee. You haven't eaten anything at noon, you have to eat something now."

Wei Luo was roused in the middle of a dream. She narrowed her eyes to clear her head as she was rather dazed.

After drinking the medicine at noon, her mouth had been bitter. Where would she have the mood to eat? She was indeed a little hungry now. Wei Luo rubbed her eyes. "Big sister Jin Lu, feed me."

Jin Lu was helpless with her, laughingly complying.

Jin Lu fed her mouthful by mouthful. Maybe because she had just woken up, her appetite was weak. She had only eaten half the bowl when she said she didn't want to eat anymore. Her small body dug into the beddings and continued to rest.

No matter how Jin Lu tried to coax her, it was useless. In the end, she had no choice but to give up. She made the kitchen keep the congee warm, so that when Wei Luo got hungry, she could bring it back in.

At nightfall, the sky gradually turned dark.

Wei Kun had just returned from the Imperial Academy when he overheard the servants speaking from inside the room, saying that Wei Luo's condition had become serious again! Without even changing his clothes, he rushed toward Wei Luo's room, finding the little girl lying in bed, her body curled up and her face white. She was also slightly twitching.

Wei Kun's heart shrunk in fear. Reaching the bed in a few large strides, he gathered Wei Luo to his chest, then sternly questioned the servants, "How did this happen?"

Wei Kun is the fifth son of Duke Ying, hence he heads the fifth branch. Wei Luo is the little Miss of the fifth branch.

symbol of a loving couple

# Chapter 30

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Wei Luo herself didn't know what was wrong with her. She had obviously already recovered, but she had unexpectedly relapsed. And it seemed to be a lot more severe compared to before.

After eating the congee, she had lied down to sleep. Halfway into resting, she got a splitting headache. Moreover, her stomach felt extremely uncomfortable, making her want to throw up. After vomiting, she not only hadn't felt any better, her body had started to slightly twitch. She had lost control over her own body and even her mind was somewhat fuzzy.

It looked like symptoms of poisoning.

However, she had only eaten a bowl of yam congee, as well as the candy from Changhong. She hadn't eaten anything else, so how could she get poisoned?

Wei Luo wasn't able to finish her thoughts as her breath gradually weakened and her long eyelashes slowly drooped down, covering her pair of glittery black eyes. She lost consciousness in the end.

Wei Kun's complexion was unsightly as he made Jin Lu and Nurse Ye bring all the servants who had worked in this room, additionally ordering someone to invite a physician without delay. He really wanted to find out, just who was so bold as to dare harm his daughter so openly!

The doctor soon rushed over. After checking Wei Luo's pulse and examining her eyes and tongue, he heavily determined. "It's poisoning."

Wei Kun clenched his fist and asked in a hoarse voice, "What poison? Can it be treated?"

The doctor shook his head as he said, "At present, it's still unclear." He let go of Wei Luo's wrist and called two maids over.

The top priority right now was to take care of Wei Luo's toxicity first. They had luckily found her in time, so the toxicity hadn't turned too grave. If they had been just a little late, it wouldn't have been solved so easily. Even if they had managed to rescue her, there would have been some aftereffects left. He told the two maids, "Think of a method to make the fourth Miss throw up, so she'll throw up everything she had previously eaten. I'll be waiting outside. Call me when you're done."

As the matter was urgent, the two maids didn't dare waste time. Following the physician's words, they promptly assisted Wei Luo into vomiting. She hadn't eaten a lot, so it didn't take long before her belly was completely empty. She looked a bit better than she did just a moment ago.

After the doctor inspected the stuff that had come out of Wei Luo, his face stiffened up and he asked the maid by the bedside, "What has the fourth Miss eaten today?"

Jin Lu wiped the corner of Wei Luo's mouth with a thin handkerchief, while blaming herself for not taking good care of her. Though she was feeling depressed, she still carefully replied to the doctor, "Miss didn't have much appetite today. She only ate a bowl of yam congee and nothing else."

The doctor asked whether there were any leftovers from that bowl of congee, and Jin Lu gave an affirmative. She made someone quickly fetch the congee from inside the kitchen. Worried that Wei Luo would be hungry after waking up, so she had kept the food warm. As soon as Wei Luo woke up, it would be ready to eat. She never expected that such a thing could occur. She had personally carried out the congee from the kitchen, and no one had touched it on the way. Was there really a problem with it?

The doctor used a spoon to stir around the congee, then raised a ginkgo nut from inside. His expression sank as he asked heavily, "Who added this thing in? When was it added?"



Jin Lu was at a loss. She didn't know, because it was the kitchen staff's responsibility.

With an ugly expression, Wei Kun squeezed out a sentence through clenched teeth, "Bring the kitchen staff here!"

It didn't take long for the cook who had made the congee, Song San, to be brought to the main room. Seeing Wei Kun, he first knelt down, then knocked his head on the floor three times in succession. "Master, this servant absolutely doesn't harbor any intentions of harming the fourth Miss..."

Who could've guessed that the problem was caused by a tiny ginkgo nut?

The ginkgo was also called a maidenhair tree. Usually, eating the nuts boiled not only didn't present a problem, it was even beneficial for the body. However, it contained toxicity when eaten raw. That type of poison manifested most distinctly in children's bodies. If it was light, there would be dizziness and vomiting. If it was heavy, it would lead to heart failure. Just now, the doctor had seen precisely an undigested ginkgo nut inside Wei Luo's vomit. It hadn't been boiled. A glance was enough to tell that it was raw.

However, the ginkgo nuts inside the congee that Jin Lu had just brought were cooked. They had probably still been raw when they were added in, but after the bowl had been left to keep warm on the stove for so long, they had already cooked.

As he found out the cause and effect, Wei Kun fiercely questioned the cook Song San, "You were the one to cook the congee. Who else could've done it besides you?"

Song San solemnly denied, raising up three fingers to swear on his life, "This servant really doesn't know..."

Don't know, don't know; those were all useless protests to Wei Kun. He was about to shout for someone to take the cook away for a punishment of 20 boards, when the cook suddenly said, "After

making the congee, this servant left once for a short while. Master, it was probably during that time that someone added this thing!”

Wei Kun’s expression sank. After pondering for a moment, he felt that there could be some truth to his words. Thus he ordered people to investigate who had come into the kitchen today, when they’d been there, and what they’d been doing there.

The results came out very quickly. Altogether two maids had gone inside the kitchen today. One was Jin Lu, the other – Jin Ci.

Jin Lu had gone to get Wei Luo’s congee. Wei Luo hadn’t given many responsibilities to Jin Ci recently. She hadn’t served nearby for ages. Why had she gone to the kitchen?

Speaking of it, Jin Lu suddenly recalled. It was precisely Jin Ci who had passed the congee to her!

As Jin Lu said that, Wei Kun took the small bell-shaped cup with inked drawings on the table and violently smashed it on the ground. He got up and arrived in front of Jin Ci to ask her, “Speak, was it you who wished to harm the young lady?”

Wei Kun was a person with a very good temperament. He was immensely tolerant toward others, gentle and courteous. However, everyone had their bottom line. As long as it concerned his children, he would change into his present self – irritable and impatient.

Jin Ci shook her head in denial, stuttering out with difficulty, “This maid...this maid, is wrongly accused...”

The facts at present were like this. Jin Lu was loyal and devoted to Wei Luo, it was absolutely impossible for her to harm Wei Luo. Jin Ci was the only one who was suspicious. Who else could it be besides her? Wei Kun didn’t ask further. He threw Jin Ci to the ground in rage. “Since you won’t speak the truth, what’s the use in keeping your tongue? Might as well cut it off!”

Jin Ci’s face immediately turned white as a sheet of paper, while

her body went limp.

Since that wasn't enough, Wei Kun added, "Deliberately plotting to murder her employer, cruel and unscrupulous! No one would want this kind of servant. After cutting off her tongue, she doesn't need to remain here. Throw her in the mountain outside the city to feed the wolves and the wild dogs."

Feeding the wolves and the wild dogs. Just thinking about it was dreadful. With those animals gnawing on her meat bit by bit, she wouldn't have the slightest chance of fighting them off. Only a pile of bones would be left in the end. Knowing that, Jin Ci was very afraid. She knelt down and kowtowed to beg for mercy, tears flowing down her face. "Master, spare my life, this maid didn't do it voluntarily... It was, it was the third madam who forced me..."

Wei Kun's body stiffened up as he turned his head to ask, "What did you say?"

In order to preserve her small life, Jin Ci spoke all about how Madam Liu had made her do it. Madam Liu had said that Wei Luo liked eating Ginkgo nuts and that there were many Ginkgo trees by the gates of [Ginkgo courtyard](#). That if she picked several to add into the fourth Miss' congee, it would let her get better even faster. Jin Ci made a final effort into struggling out of this. "Master, this maid is innocent... This maid didn't know that raw ginkgo seeds were poisonous..."

Wei Kun kicked her aside. Even if she didn't know they were poisonous, adding arbitrary things to the fourth young lady's food was enough to prove her guilt.

Wei Kun sat down on the chair again, taking in a few mouthfuls of air as he held his forehead. He didn't expect to get this kind of outcome.

Why would the third madam want to harm Wei Luo? He originally thought that Madam Du's evil intentions hadn't disappeared. That harming Wei Luo once wasn't enough for her,

so she had harmed her a second time. But it was actually Madam Liu!

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After deliberating for a long time, Wei Kun couldn't help but call the third Master Wei Chang over to his place.

The two brothers hadn't sat together for a talk in a long while. All these years, they had been the same as strangers. Though they lived in the same Duke Ying's residence, they still rarely spoke to each other. When Wei Chang came over, he naturally didn't have a good expression. Sitting down on the ironwood chair, he asked, "Why are you looking for me?"

Wei Kun didn't beat around the bush with him. He directly ordered for Jin Ci to be brought, then made her repeat her words from before.

Jin Ci had originally received some benefits from Madam Liu. Madam Liu had promised her that as long as she completed this task, when the time came for her to leave the residence, she would arrange for a good marriage for her. Now that it seemed that she wouldn't make it out alive, and since her life was more important, she had no other choice but to spill everything in detail.

By the time her story was over, Wei Chang's complexion was as black as the bottom of a pot. He asked, "Do you have any evidence?"

Jin Ci took something out from within her sleeve and placed it in front of Wei Chang. "This is what the madam gave me in advance. Master, take a look..."

It was a pair of golden earrings with jade stones. The design was ordinary and not that distinct. However, Wei Chang actually recognized them, because Madam Liu had once scorned them, complaining that they weren't compatible with her style and didn't match her clothes. And now they were in Jin Ci's hands...

Wei Chang closed his eyes and tightly gripped the armrest. He didn't speak for a long time.

Wei Kun motioned for the servants to lead Jin Ci out, coldly instructing, "Cut off her tongue and sell her away from this residence. Let nature run its course."

One couldn't speak irresponsibly without a tongue. Wei Kun's act could also be taken as a consideration for the family.

Jin Ci didn't expect that after escaping death, she would still suffer. She was instantly frightened stiff, unceasingly weeping and begging Wei Kun for forgiveness. "Master, have mercy..."

Wei Kun seemed as though he couldn't hear anything. The guard lead her outside, held her chin still, drew out his blade, and did a swift motion that seemed to happen in a flash. Right away, blood started spurting out of Jin Ci's mouth, dying the ground in front of her red. Her whole body was covered in cold sweat due to the pain, but she couldn't utter a single word. Falling down, she shivered all over.

Inside the room, Wei Chang quietly sat for a while, then collected the pair of earrings with an expressionless face and got up to leave [Pine courtyard](#). He headed for [Pear courtyard](#) in the third branch house.

He had just come back from outside. Before he could even reach Pear courtyard, he had been called over to Pine courtyard by Wei Kun.

So now, he had barely stepped inside the main room, when Madam Liu came out to welcome him. Showing concern, she said, "Why are you coming back so late today? Did something delay you? Will you be having dinner? I'll ask someone to warm up the food and bring it over."

After saying so much, she noticed that Wei Chang hadn't spoken a word, and even his face didn't show the slightest expression. He

was looking at her fixedly instead. Her heart panicked, but she kept calm on the surface. Putting on a small smile, she asked, "Why are you looking at me like this? Is there something on my face?"

Wei Chang was observing her – the wife he'd been married to for seven or eight years. It was the first time he felt she was so unfamiliar. He admitted that he was unfair to her, so he did anything to make it up to her. She could be rude, arrogant and willful; he would be patient and accommodating. She had some enmity with Wei Luo and Changhong; he could also understand that. But he'd never thought that her mind would give birth to harmful intentions.

That child was only six years old. What was she actually thinking?

Madam Liu grew increasingly uneasy. She stepped forward to pull him by the hand toward the round table. "The kitchen made your favorite dishes today. Come and see..."

Wei Chang stood motionless. He took out the pair of golden earrings and placed them on the table.

The earrings shone red in the setting sun's few remaining rays of light. After Madam Liu saw them, her expression turned rigid.

Ginkgo courtyard is where Madam Du lives now, after she got banished by Wei Kun

Pine courtyard is where Wei Kun and his children live

Pear courtyard is where Wei Chang and his wife live

# Chapter 31

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“What is this?” Wei Chang asked her. His face was expressionless.

Liu-shi inhaled. For a short moment, her expression was flustered. She quickly adjusted her expression.

Without any hurry, she smiled and asked, “Isn’t this an earring? It’s quite plain. Why did Master ask me to look at this?”

Yes, it was quite plain. It was because of this reason that he had a deep impression of it. The things that were in his wife’s dressing room were all elaborate and gorgeous. Because it was rare for him to see an earring with a simple design, it made him pay more notice to that earring.

Wei Chang wasn’t in any urgency to expose her.

He tranquilly and even-temperedly asked, “I remember you had an earring that looks exactly like this one. Where is it? Bring it out for me to see.”

Liu-shi’s smile remained calm. Her reply was waterproof, “I disliked its ordinary style, so I gave it to someone else in passing.”

She asked with a bit of curiosity, “Master, what’s wrong? Why are you asking me this today? The meal has been warmed. Let’s go eat dinner first.”

Wei Chang didn’t intend to allow her to pass over her deception. He grabbed her hand to walk toward the desk. He held her hand tightly and brought her to the front.

“Whom did you give this to? Let that servant girl bring it here to see. Or do you want to say that you gave it to the fifth family’s servant girl?”

Liu-shi’s face finally started to crack.

She firmly stood and angrily said, “What does Master want to

say? What's wrong with you today? It's only an earring. It isn't worth you being so serious..."

Before she could finish speaking, Wei Chang slapped her!

A man's strength was great, especially when he was angered. When he slapped Liu-shi's face, she fell to the ground from the force. One side of her cheek quickly became as swollen as a steamed bun. Liu-shi knelt on the ground while she clutched her cheek.

She raised her head to look at him in disbelief, "Master."

At the same time, from the doorway, there came a fragile sound, "Mom!" Third Miss Wei Ya held the doorway for support. Her face showed surprise at the scene inside. Daddy had ferociously slapped mom to the point that her cheek was swollen. She was startled and afraid. Her lips trembled as she looked at Wei Chang.

With hesitation, she went forward, "Daddy don't hit mom..."

Wei Chang was in a fit of anger. He always had a violent temper and when he was furious, no one was an exception from his mood.

He glared at her and said, "Leave!" Wei Ya was frozen by his glare. She resolutely shook herself.

Her eyes had tears. With uneasy and dread, she said, "Daddy..."

Wei Chang didn't continue looking at her. He turned his head and ordered the mama at the doorway to carry her out. He wouldn't allow her to continue pleading for Liu-shi.

Held by the mama, Wei Ya twisted and cried, "Mom... I want mom."

Originally, Liu-shi's heart held resentment. Hearing Wei Ya's cries, the resentment returned.

She looked at Wei Chang with red eyes, "Did Master hear something when he was outside?"

Is that why you're venting your anger on Ya-er and me?



Otherwise, you wouldn't act so unusual."

Even now, she was still pretending. Wei Chang's gaze was coldly fierce. He ordered the servants to go outside to let her keep a little bit of face. "Speak. Were you responsible for the poison in Wei Luo's bowl?"

Liu-shi face slightly changed. She raised her head and said, "Poison? Wei Luo was poisoned?"

Wei Chang reminded her, "Gingko. Nuts."

At this point, she couldn't continue to pretend. The bag had a hole and she could only think of a way to make up for it. Liu-shi face was slightly pale.

She haltingly said, "What happened? Ya-er frequently eats gingko nuts and she's perfectly fine. Why should she be poisoned from gingko nuts? I thought all children like to eat gingko nuts. And since gingko nuts are beneficial for the body, I let a servant from the Pine courtyard add them to Wei Luo's bowl..."

If a woman weren't proficient in medicine, it would be normal for her to not know. However, when he carefully thought about it, there were mistakes in her words. She never cared about Wei Luo previously. Why would she suddenly care about Wei Luo's food now?

Wei Chang sat down on a chair. He coldly fixed his eyes on her.

Without any warning, he said, "Even if you harbor a grudge against Jiang Miao Lan, don't take it out on her children. Those two children are innocent."

Liu-shi startled. She looked at him in disbelief, "What did you say?"

Jiang Miao Lan's name was a taboo in the Duke of Ying's residence. When she was still here, everyone only secretly talked about her. After she left and vanished without a trace for so many years, she faded in everyone's memory... but someone still

remembered. After the seeds of jealousy and hate were planted in the heart, they would grow roots unless someone pulled out even the roots or ruthlessly strangled them.

Wei Chang was probably disappointed in her, or perhaps he was deliberately teaching her a lesson.

He continued, "Fifth younger brother doesn't know what you and Du-shi did that that year, but I know everything."

Those words were like a heavy lightening bolt that ruthlessly struck Liu-shi! Liu-shi shook. She stabilized her upper body with great difficulty, but drooped to the ground. Her face was deathly pale.

She did her best, but she still revealed a trace of trembling, "What exactly is Master saying? ... The more I hear, the more I don't understand."

Wei Chang knew she was pretending to not know. His gaze was cold. He curled up his lip in derision, "Even now, you still want to conceal the truth? You couldn't tolerate her and Du-shi wanted to marry Wei Kun. You and her designed an act for Jiang Miao Lan to see, so that her heart would turn cold and into dust. So she would rather abandon her children in her determination to leave this sad place." As he spoke, layer-by-layer, he breathed out his turbid anger.

He coldly looked towards the woman on the ground, "Were my words, right? Do you also want me to explain how you two setup that scene?"

So, he knew everything. Even under the circumstance of knowing everything, he lived with her for so long. Did his heart always think of her this way? Liu-shi could only feel that her face was painfully hot. She felt ashamed and resentful.

So, this was why he wasn't cold or warm to her all these years. Their only child was Wei Ya. Whenever she mentioned wanting

another child, he showed no interest. It wasn't that he was uninterested in sex. It was that he wasn't interested in her.

It was as if you thought you were wearing clothes, and then ten years later, suddenly, someone stopped you.

He asked, "Why are you naked?"

Liu-shi stood up. On the verge of collapsing, she asked with an empty voice, "When did you know?"

"You don't need to know this," Wei Chang looked away from her line of sight as if he didn't want to see her.

He furrowed his eyebrows. After considering for a long time, he said, "Ya-er is still young. She needs a mother. For now, I won't divorce you. But, I need to account for this issue with fifth younger brother. Wei Luo is still lying in bed. If this wasn't discovered quickly, she might be close to death right now. Your heart is too malevolent! Your days are too easy and comfortable. In the future, don't leave the house. Stay in your room copying scriptures!"

Original translation is from fuyuneko dot org. If you're reading this elsewhere, this chapter has been stolen. Please stop supporting theft.

After he finished, he looked at the golden earrings on the table. He asserted, "Since you don't like these jewelry, give away all the jewelry in the house. Since you wronged Wei Luo first, give these things to her to be used as her dowry later."

Liu-shi was a vain woman who loved beautiful things. To give away the jewelry she saved over many years to a child she loathed, it was worse than giving away her life! Liu-shi felt like her heart was cut out.

She said, "Master... If I give those away, what will happen to Ya-er in the future? Ya-er will also need a dowry for her marriage!"

This didn't move Wei Chang. He waved his sleeve to brush her off, "Ya-er is a daughter of the Ying family. She will not suffer any

grievances when she gets married.” He left the room without saying another word.

Liu-shi’s heart was like cold ashes. She bewilderedly sat on the floor. Her mind kept going back to Wei Chang’s words. Until now, she had felt like she was in a dream.

How did he know? When did he know? How would she still have the face to be near him in the future?!

Then, she thought of all the jewelry that had taken her many years to collect. Box by box and piece by piece; it would have to be surrendered to Wei Luo. She wanted to beat her chest and stamped her feet in regret!

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Pine Courtyard.

Wei Luo woke up the next morning. Last night, she had drunk the medicine prescribed by the doctor. She felt much better now with her headache and nausea was gone. She raised her head from the scarlet bedding. Her small, white as snow, delicate face showed curiosity. She blinked her delicate eyelashes. In the blink of a dark eye, she looked through the window.

Outside her window, there were servants coming in and out the courtyard since early morning as if they were moving something. She didn’t know what they were doing.

What happened after she was poisoned yesterday? She wanted to call Jin Lu inside to ask her, but when she opened her mouth, her voice was soft and quiet like a newborn. No one from outside would be able to hear her.

“Wu.” (crying/whimpering sound)

There was a cup near her bed. She could only push that white porcelain cup that had blue water lilies. The cup fell to the ground and produced a crisp, shattering sound.

The people outside finally heard noise. Jin Lu quickly walked around the dividing screen to Wei Luo.

Seeing that Wei Luo was awake, Jin Lu was delighted and startled, “Miss!”

While pouring a cup of warm water, Jin Lu said, “Miss, drink some water for your dry throat.” She didn’t have time to clean up the shattered porcelain cup.

Wei Luo raised her arm and drank a mouthful of water. She could finally speak, but her voice was like waxy like glutinous rice.

With the voice of a person who just woke up, she asked, “Elder sister Jin Lu, what’s going on outside?”

This was a long story that started from yesterday. Jin Lu placed a gold and silver embroidered pillow behind Wei Luo’s back, so that she would be more comfortable. Jin Lu wanted to vividly describe the situation last night, but she remembered that Wei Luo was only a child. Wei Kun had warned her to not say too much in front of Wei Luo to avoid her young heart becoming traumatized.

Jin Lu only said, “Miss, you ate something yesterday that hurt your stomach because Third Madam accidentally had someone put the wrong thing in your food. And so, third Madam wanted to apologize by sending over some items.

But, the amount of items she sent was too much. At first, Jin Lu was shocked. It seemed as if all of the third branch’s jewelry were sent over here. Just now, she was outside counting and recording those items with Ye-shiso that later, there will be a record to trace. These gold and silver jewelry were all very expensive. There were agate, coral, gems, and pearls. Looking at these items, a person would be dazzled. Third Madam was very generous this time.

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Liu-shi wasn’t willing, but she had no choice. Her heart ached to the point of bleeding, but she had no way to prevent this. She

could only watch as each item was carried outside. In the end, she couldn't bear it anymore. Her eyes rolled back and she fainted.

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These items included part of Liu-shi's dowry. And now, these items belonged to Wei Luo.

Wei Luo had Jin Lu bring over the account book to look at the amount of jewelry. This Liu-shi was extravagant to the extreme! Was she not worried that so many head ornaments would bend her neck?

Although Jin Lu didn't openly say what had happened, Wei Luo could tell from guessing. Liu-shi's heart harbored resentment and she wanted to hurt Wei Luo. In the end, she had only hurt herself. Wei Luo didn't die and Liu-shi lost all of her jewelry and part of her dowry.

Wei Luo sat on her bed and thought of the suffering she experienced yesterday. Her pitch-black eyes darkened.

Since the third branch sent these items, it meant that Wei Chang planned to protect Liu-shi from her offence. Were they going to just forget this incident? If Liu-shi could harm her once, she could harm her again.

Wei Luo also learned that Jin Ci's tongue had been cut off and she had been sold off. This was convenient, now Wei Luo wouldn't have to do anything. Jin Ci and Jin Ge were both people that had been bribed by Du-shi. They had only watched when she was taken and sold away that time. She had currently been worried about how to deal with them. Who would have expected that they would have dropped themselves on the knife's blade? Wei Luo thought for a moment.

Then, she innocently pointed at a spot on the account book and asked, "Elder sister Jin Lu, there are three pairs of these type of earrings, what are they?"

Jin Lu walked forward to look. She had some lessons in reading and could recognize those words, "To answer Miss, these are gold-gilded jasmine earrings."

Wei Luo blinked, "Were they all given to me?"

Jin Lu nodded, "They were all given to you."

She said too much. In addition to those earrings, Wei Luo was also given many other types of earrings. Wei Luo touched her earlobe. Her mouth was distressed and she said, "But I don't have pierced ears. I won't be able to wear them. It would be better to give these to elder sister Jin Lu. Elder sister Jin Lu will look pretty wearing them..."

Jin Lu was overwhelmed by this favor. She quickly kneeled down to thank her.

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Wei Luo also picked additional earrings to give to the other servant girls in Pine Courtyard to wear every day. She said it would look good if they wore them. The servant girls profusely kowtowed in thanks. They were thankful and touched. They couldn't have imagined that Wei Luo had another purpose.

It would be the best if Liu-shi saw the servant girls wearing her treasured collection. Her heart would feel the same pain that Wei Luo felt when she was poisoned yesterday.

Ye-shi put away the account book after Wei Luo was done. The items she had just given away were only the tip of the iceberg. She still had many jewelry left from Liu-shi. After Ye-shi left, Jin Lu came in with a bowl of medicine.

She sat on the bed and said, "The poison in Miss's body hasn't completely cleared. Drink another bowl of medicine. After you finish the medicine, you'll recover from this illness."

Wei Luo disliked the bitter medicine. Just as she was about to get the box that held the sugar balls that Chang Hong had given her,

she suddenly heard noise at the doorway. She stopped moving her hand to look outside her bed area.

Jin Wu went around the room divider to report, “Miss, Prince Jing heard that you were sick and came by just to see you.”

Wei Luo was stunned. Why would Zhao Jie visit her?

Was it because she hadn’t gone to class for too long, so he came to see what the reason was? But he shouldn’t have personally come...

While Wei Luo was puzzled, a navy blue figure walked into the room. His body was slender and his manners were noble.

Zhao Jie slowly walked closer. Wei Kun was behind him.

On the bed, there was an exquisite young girl. Her skin was white as snow and her big eyes were confused and helpless. Her face that showed the paleness that came from being sick made her seem more like a crafted, treasured doll. She was obediently sitting there.

She raised her head to look at Zhao Jie and with a weak and lovable voice, she said, “Big brother.”

The two words big brother was overly sweet. Originally, Zhao Jie only came here to see how she was recovering from her illness. He didn’t expect that seeing her would cause his heart to feel a bit sorry for her.



## Chapter 32

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Zhu Geng had said she only had a stomachache from overeating. From Zhao Jie's current glance, that didn't seem true. If it were an ordinary stomachache, she would have recovered within three days, but she remained listless even now. Not only was she still sick, she looked worse than before. On the square, Chinese cedar table near the front of her bed, there was a bowl of medicine that was probably meant for her to drink. Zhao Jie didn't say anything.

Next to him, Wei Kun said, "Ah Luo, Prince Jing came here to visit you under the Empress's order. Are you feeling better? Did you obediently drink your medicine?"

Wei Luo looked at the medicine. She shook her head twice and said, "Before I had time to drink it, daddy had come here."

Although Empress Chen was concerned about Wei Luo's health, she didn't expressly say anything. She only hoped that he would show a gesture of goodwill towards Wei Luo. She wouldn't have expected that Zhao Jie would personally visit her.

Zhao Jie looked at that delicate, small face. He sat down on her bed and stretched out his hand to pick up the white porcelain bowl that had blue water lilies. He scooped up a small spoonful of medicine and brought it to her lips.

"Liu Li has been bored since you haven't been going to the palace. She asked me to tell you that she misses you." He was smiling as he said, "How did you get sick when you were perfectly all right before? Could it possibly be the result of you eating too many grapes that time?"

It was okay when he didn't mention that time. As soon as he said those words, Wei Luo was angry. That blabbermouth!

Wei Luo's puffed out her cheeks and looked at him resentfully. Her small face was helplessly adorable.

“Big brother, don’t mention that again.”

Zhao Jie couldn’t resist laughing. Okay, he won’t mention that anymore. She was sick, so he won’t continue teasing her.

“Come here and drink your medicine.”

Wei Luo opened her mouth to drink. The bitter and smelly medicine quickly filled her mouth. She pursed her lips and the rest of her face scrunched up in distaste. Although medicine was bitter, it still had to be drunk.

Zhao Jie fed her the medicine spoonful by spoonful. By the time she finally finished, her eyes were gleaming with tears. Zhao Jie used his thumb to wipe away her tears.

With a smile on his face, he said, “Since you know it doesn’t taste good, recover quickly so that you won’t have to keep drinking it.”

As he spoke, he saw her take out a small enamel case with a lotus pattern from beneath her pillow. She opened the box to take out a purple candy to eat. The suffering on her face quickly disappeared and only a sweet satisfaction was left behind.

Zhao Jie contemplatively asked, “What’s that?” His voice was neither too fast nor too slow.

Ah Luo held the box carefully as if it was treasure.

With a proud look, she informed him, “Chang Hong gave this to me. There are many different types of candy inside. They’re all very sweet.”

Zhao Jie unhurriedly said, “Oh.” His expression didn’t change and he was stilling looking at her.

Wei Luo quickly thought. Since she had already taken her candy out, should she also offer him one to try? Otherwise, he would think she was too stingy. Without a better option, she picked out an orange round candy from the box and reluctantly brought it close this face.

“Big brother, try one.”

Zhao Jie curved his lips. He usually didn't like to eat sweet things. But since this girl had brought it to his lips, he didn't refuse. He ate it directly from her hand. It was indeed very sweet. Underneath the first layer of sugar, there was an overwhelming tangerine filling that poured out. His mouth overflowed with sweetness and he almost didn't hide his reaction. Seeing the young girl's hopeful expression, he couldn't resist rubbing the spaced between her eyebrows.

“En, very sweet.”

When Wei Luo smiled, her eyes were like crescent moons and her sickly face looked better. Her entire body became spirited.

Zhao Jie missed seeing her vigorous and lively self. When she was like a fiery chili pepper, his mood couldn't help but improve when he saw her. He put down the empty bowl on the square table near the bed.

He stood up and said to Wei Kun, “This prince's residence has rare and precious medicine. If fourth miss needs it, don't hesitate to send someone to request it. Just say that it was this prince's gesture of goodwill.”

(T/N: I almost forgot that Wei Luo's dad was also in the room with them.)

Wei Kun was overwhelmed by this favor and profusely thanked him. In fact, after the doctor had issued his instructions, she was mostly okay. But, it was rare of Prince Jing to show such considerate and kind feelings. Even if he later didn't fetch that medicine, he still had to thank him.

Everyone in the capital knew that the fifteen-year-old Prince Jing was person who would seek revenge for the smallest grievance. His methods were vicious. If a person provoked him, then that person wouldn't have a good ending. Conversely, if you could obtain his

good graces, then you wouldn't have to worry about anything in the capital.

Last time in Huguo temple (where Ah Luo was almost sold off to slave traders), he saved Ah Luo. And now, he also came to visit her when she was sick. These two people could be considered to be fated together. No wonder, Prince Jing was more caring towards her compared to how he treated other people.

Since Wei Luo wasn't Zhao Jie's daughter, it would be inappropriate for him to continue staying any longer. He left her room with Wei Kun.

Standing in the outside corridor, he said, "Let Ah Luo focus on recovering from her sickness the next few days. She doesn't need to rush going back to the palace. It won't be too late for her to go back once she feels better."

Wei Kun nodded. He respectfully walked him to the entrance to send him off. After Wei Kun saw him sitting down in his imperial carriage, he turned around to go back.

Inside the carriage, Zhao Jie opened the curtains to hand over a handkerchief to Zhu Geng.

He leisurely said, "Check what's in here. What was its purpose?"

Zhu Geng opened the handkerchief to look. Inside, there were the remains of a medicinal decoction. He was surprised for a moment, and then he raised his head to look at Zhao Jie.

"Your highness, this is..."

Zhao Jie wasn't willing to say more. He let go of the curtain.

He quietly said, "Just follow my order."

They had just visited Duke Ying's residence. This could only be fourth miss's medicine that the prince had personally helped her drunk. The answer was obvious... But Zhu Geng couldn't understand, why would the prince trouble himself over a girl? He

couldn't figure that out. He could only follow Zhao Jie's order.

The information arrived quickly.

Originally, he had thought it was only ordinary medicine used to treat stomachaches. Unexpectedly, it was a medicine to cure poison! Zhu Geng hurriedly reported the news to Zhao Jie.

After Zhao Jie heard, he was silent for a moment.

He asked, "Ginko nut poisoning?"

Zhu Geng nodded and repeated the doctor's words, "While it's okay to eat cooked ginko nuts, raw ones are poisonous. Children would be especially sensitive. Duke Ying's fourth miss must have been poisoned by this."

He couldn't help feeling bad for this fourth miss that was poisoned in her home. He didn't know who poisoned her or who would be cruel enough to want to her kill her. When Zhao Jie thought of this matter, it was evident that her situation was bad. He carefully pondered for a moment. He thought of that storeroom where the servants hadn't finished storing treasure boxes when they visited. These two things were probably related.

He ordered Zhu Geng and Yang Hao to investigate Duke Ying's residence and tell him the results one by one. They checked who had acted strangely in the past few days and the reasons for their strange actions.

This translation belongs to FuyuNeko. Meow.

The two quickly found out that this time it was Duke Ying's third branch's Liu-shi. They had covered up the surface with a peaceful appearance by saying that she felt bad about accidentally letting Wei Luo eat raw ginkgo nuts. But, after a careful investigation, they found out that this wasn't true. Zhu Geng and Yan Hao also brought back other news.

"Fourth miss's mother, Jiang-shi, wasn't dead. She had feigned death in order to leave Duke Ying's residence. Her tomb was

empty...”

At that time, someone had secretly helped Jiang Miao Lan leave without any notice. Even though Wei Kun immediately started to search for her, he didn't find her. The people from Duke Ying's residence told outsiders that she had died from illness. Only a small number of people knew that she didn't die. No one knew where she went.

As for Jiang Miao Lan, Wei Kun, and Wei Chang, their past wasn't a secret. It was easy to inquire. And so, it was clear why Du-shi and Liu-shi wanted to harm Wei Luo. It was nothing more than female jealousy. Because of jealousy and hate, they couldn't even tolerate a six-year-old child.

Zhao Jie turned the jade ring around his thumb and slowly said, “Isn't third madam's paternal uncle, Liu Zhang Qing, one of the officials in Huai province's salt transportation department?”

Zhu Geng nodded, “He is.”

Zhao Jie closed his eyes slightly and his eyebrows straightened, but it wasn't clear if his anger had been suppressed. His voice was calm as if he wasn't only a fifteen-year-old.

“Salt transportation official is a lucrative and cushy job. Liu Zhang Qing must have many ill-gotten gains and bribes over the years. Order people to investigate his books and records. Then, pick one or two incidences of bribery to report to the emperor to let Liu Zhang Qing taste some suffering.

Zhu Geng acknowledged Zhao Jie's order. It seemed that the prince had truly set his heart on that young girl.

Zhao Jie had a stance of a guard dog protecting a baby animal. Now that he was eyeing Liu family for retribution, that family's future days wouldn't be happy.

As Zhu Geng and Yang Hao were about to leave, Zhao Jie said, “Yang Hao, you don't need wait on me in the future. Go to Duke

Ying's to closely follow and watch over the fourth miss."

Zhao Jie paused, and then continued to say, "Protect her safety. If she has any problems, report to this prince immediately."

Yang Hao froze in place. He and Zhu Geng had personally protected Zhao Jie for the last five to six years. Now, he was suddenly being sent off to someone else.

Yang Hao was somewhat startled and he said, "Prince..."

Zhao Jie rested his chin on his hand, lifted his eyes to look at him, and said, "You don't want to go?"

It wasn't that Yang Hao didn't want to guard her. He just wasn't used to his job suddenly changing. Yang Hao took a moment to absorb this change and accepted the order.

"Should fourth miss be informed that this subordinate would be protecting her?"

When Zhao Jie coldly looked at him, Yang Hao knew his question was stupid. How could it be okay for other people to know that Prince Jing had ordered someone to protect Duke Ying's fourth miss? What would other people think? This wouldn't be good for either of their reputation and would attract unnecessary trouble.

Yang Hao quickly corrected himself, "Subordinate understands and will not disappoint the prince."

Zhao Jie waved his hand, "You can leave."

———

And so, Yang Hao spent every day secretly following Wei Luo. He carefully observed what she ate every morning, what type of sweet soups she liked to drink, and all of her conversations. At night, he would go back to Prince Jing's residence. He would pick out a few important things to tell Zhao Jie. If there was nothing important, he would simply report everything that Wei Luo did that day.

This didn't bore Zhao Jie. As Yang Hao spoke, Zhao Jie would

listen as he worked on his own things.

This night, Zhao Jie was reviewing the information for Huai province's salt transportation.

By his side, Yang Hao said, "Fourth miss's adult tooth have grown in..."

Zhao Jie paused. He thought of how that little girl looked with her missing baby tooth. Her tooth finally grew out after a few months. He quietly laughed. He raised a writing brush to call to attention a few words in the ledger book.

Zhao Jie asked, "What was her reaction?"

Yang Hao paused in his report, then continued, "Fourth miss seems very happy. She smiles more often... her pronunciation is clearer."

Zhao Jie couldn't help laughing. He had previously laughed at her for missing a tooth and her lisp when she talked. This little girl probably held a grudge against him for a long time.

Now that her tooth had grown in, he felt a little bit of regret. He would no longer be able to hear her lisp.

———

Wei Luo didn't know that her actions were constantly being monitored. Her incisor tooth had grown in. She was in an excellent mood now that no one would laugh at her for her missing tooth.

At the same time, in Duke Ying's residence, two major events had happened. Something bad had happened to third madam's second paternal uncle. Previously, he had a cushy job that everyone had envied, and he financially supported the Liu family. But, now Liu Zhang Qing was accused of misconduct by the emperor. The emperor was preparing to investigate Huai province's salt department. Everyone in Liu family was potentially endangered. No one knew who else would become entangled with this impeachment or how many charges of misconduct there would be



if the emperor really investigated. Even if they had nine lives, it wouldn't be enough!

In the past few days, third madam was alarmed and restless. Originally, she had been punished by Wei Chang to copy Buddhist scriptures. Now, of her own initiative, she was also burning incense and praying to Buddha. Everyday, she would want to sincerely copy at least five pages to ease her heart.

Her actions were understandable. Liu Zhang Qing was the backbone of Liu family. If he fell, then the Liu family would also fall. Although Liu-shi had married into Duke Ying's family, the Liu family was still her original family. Also, if she didn't have a parental family to support her, her future days in Duke Ying's residence probably wouldn't be good...

The other matter was about Ginko courtyard's Du-shi. As winter approached, each day was colder than the previous day. Du-shi and her growing fetus lived in Ginko courtyard with only two maidservants to care for them. One day, she slipped while walking down a flight of stairs. With a head covered in sweat from the fall, she went into early labor!

## Chapter 33

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Since Wei Luo's hand was small, her hold on the writing brush was unsteady and it was very strenuous for her to write. So, Wei Kun held her hand to teach her how to write each stroke.

Just as they finished writing the Chinese character for "quiet", a maidservant hurriedly reported from outside the study, "Master, madam is about to give birth!"

Wei Kun's hand that held the writing brush stiffened. He turned his head to look at the doorway.

Hong Ya was a servant girl that had been recently attending to Du-shi. She had run here and was now puffing and blowing to try to catch her breath. She was too worried to follow the rules at this time.

Wei Kun frowned, put down the writing brush, and asked, "This shouldn't be the time yet?"

Du-shi's was one month pregnant in March. It was calculated that she would give birth at the end of November. It was only early November now. How could she be giving birth?

Hong Ya explained, "The snow had fallen yesterday. Madam had wanted to walk around the courtyard. Who could have known that the steps would be slippery? Madam wasn't paying attention for a moment and fell down the stairs."

During this time, she and Lu Yi were washing clothes. There was no one else in Gingko Courtyard and they had to do everything themselves. It was a bitterly cold day. They weren't carefully watching over Du-shi. Who could have expected that in a blink of an eye, she would have an accident?!

Hong Ya and Lu Yi had been forced to follow Du-shi to Gingko Courtyard. Previously, they had already felt discontent towards her and normally didn't do their utmost. However, in the end, Du-

shi was the fifth madam of Duke Ying's family. If something did happen to her, they wouldn't be able to avoid being punished. This was why they were so frightened at the moment.

Wei Kun asked, "Has someone been sent to fetch the midwife?"

Hong Ya lowered her head, "Not yet... it happened too quickly. We only had time to bring Madam back to her room."

Besides, Du-shi was still under punishment and fifth master was angry with her. Who would dare mention anything about Du-shi in front of him? So, even now, there wasn't a single midwife attending Du-shi.

At this moment, unprepared for the pain, Du-shi could only cry and scream on her bed.

Wei Kun thought about the matter, and then said, "Fetch a midwife and bring her to Gingko Courtyard. I'll decide after the child is born."

After Hong Ya received his orders, she didn't delay and quickly left.

Wei Luo wiggled her way out Wei Kun's lap and looked in the direction that Hong Ya had departed. For a long time, she didn't say anything.

This child was a protective talisman to Du-shi. If she gave birth to a boy, Wei Kun might bring her back from Gingko Courtyard. How could Wei Luo let that happen? She quickly thought. Without saying a word, she ran outside.

Wei Kun called out, "Ah Luo, where are you going?"

Wei Luo didn't stop. She only diligently ran. She was so absorbed that she collided with many servant girls on the way. Finally, she firmly stopped in front of Wei Chang Hong's room.

Wei Kun finally caught up to her. He was worried that something had happen to her because of her unusual behavior. He didn't

expect that she wanted to see Chang Hong. He let out a relieved sigh. He stooped over and put a hand on her shoulder.

“Why were you so anxious about seeing Chang Hong...” Before he finished his question, he suddenly stopped.

The little girl’s face was covered in tears that had been scattered across her face by the wind. She cried without saying anything. The teardrops continued to roll down her face. She was looked indescribably pitiful.

She finally said, “Daddy... daddy doesn’t want us anymore. I feel bad.”

Wei Kun’s heart felt sorry for this child that he loved dearly. He used his sleeve to wipe away her tears.

He couldn’t help lowering his voice to say, “Why are you saying such nonsense? How could daddy not want you? Daddy loves the two of you the most.”

She choked with sobs and murmured, “After the head-wife gives birth to a child, daddy will like him and won’t like us anymore...”

This translation belongs to FuyuNeko. Mew

Wei Kun was speechless. He didn’t expect that she would understand everything. A child’s intuition was the most accurate. Even though he had hid everything from her, she was still aware. She was only an innocent, young child. But, her heart was unexpectedly filled with worries.

Wei Kun felt remorse. He squatted down to hold her and gently patted her head to appease her worries.

“Ah Luo, don’t be scared. Even after the head-wife gives birth to a child, daddy will still like the two of you the most.”

Alarmed by the sound outside, Chang Hong opened the door.

Seeing Wei Luo sobbing at the door, his expression changed, “Ah Luo?”

Wei Luo wiped away her tears on Wei Kun's shoulder. She looked at Chang Hong with red eyes.

Chang Hong walked closer and asked, "Were you crying?"

Wei Luo didn't want him to know why she was crying. After all, her fake tears were only meant to deceive Wei Kun.

She rubbed her eyes and said, "Today is really cold. It was so cold that my tears came out."

Chang Hong wasn't a fool and he said, "Nonsense. How could cold weather cause you to cry?"

Wei Luo insisted that this was true with an obstinate look on her face.

Chang Hong pursed his lips while looking at her. He wasn't good at quarreling, so he could only accept her nonsensical logic.

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Without entering Du-shi's bedroom in Ginkgo Courtyard, one could hear a woman screaming herself hoarse.

Wei Kun stood outside. Fourth madam had also hurried over after she was informed.

Wei Luo was wrapped in a large cloak decorated with red peony flowers. She and Chang Hong played with the snow under the pine trees. The two of them would throw snowballs at each other. In a short time, they were both covered in snow. A snowball happened to hit Wei Zhang's foot. She was standing next to Wei Kun.

Wei Zheng turned around to glare at them with red eyes.

She tugged at Wei Kun's sleeve and asked, "Daddy, will my mom die?"

Wei Kun asked fourth madam to watch over Ah Luo and Chang Hong. He was worried they would catch a cold if they kept playing with the snow.

As for Wei Zheng's question, he thought for a moment before saying, "She won't."

As expected, his words set Wei Zheng's mind at ease. She continued to patiently and quietly wait.

The screams from inside the room continued from morning until evening. At the beginning, the sound was intense and reverberating. By the end, it was only faint gasping for breath.

This birth was more painful than her first child's. Since it was a premature baby, it would be fortunate enough if she could give birth to the baby safely.

At nightfall, when the stars twinkled, a baby's cry was finally heard in Gingko Courtyard.

It was followed by the midwife's delighted voice, "The baby is born!"

Wei Kun and fourth madam looked at each other for a moment before entering the room. Inside Du-shi's bedroom, they went around the room divider screen that was decorated with four joyful magpies only to see Du-shi weakly lying on her bed. She was soaked in sweat. It wasn't clear if she was aware or not.

After the midwife saw Wei Kun entering the room, she happily brought an infant swaddled in a cloth that had been embroidered with words "more sons, more happiness" in front of him.

She joyfully said, "Congratulations master, it's a baby boy. Master has such good fortune. Look at this child..." When she talked to this point, she didn't see Wei Kun showing any reaction. When she raised her head to look at his face, she saw that this master wasn't the same as other fathers.

When he looked at his child, his gaze didn't have any joy. There were only calmness and quietness as if he hadn't looked forward to the birth of this child.

The midwife immediately stopped talking and stiffly continued

to hold the child. She wasn't sure what she should do next.

Wei Kun went past the midwife to walk to the bed. He opened the curtain veil to look inside.

Du-shi had gone through a day of torment, so she was currently deeply unconscious. After she had given birth to the child, she probably didn't have the energy to look at the child to see what he looked like.

Wei Kun looked away from her and said to fourth madam Qin-shi, "Fourth elder sister-in-law, I'll have to trouble you to take care of this child."

Qin-shi took the child from the midwife, and then she pulled up her lips to smile and said, "What are you saying? You don't need to thank me. In the future, the child will not suffer under my care."

The midwife finally understood what was happening. She was astonished. Could it be that the fourth madam will raise this child? Then this fifth madam...

Early on, Wei Kun had planned this. Once this child was born, regardless of gender, he would give this child to the fourth madam to foster. After the child was five, he would let the child meet Du-shi. Du-shi's moral character was corrupt, so she wasn't suitable to look after a child. This could also be counted as her punishment. She had previously wanted to sell Ah Luo and he had almost lost his most precious daughter. Now, he would let her experience the feeling of losing a child. She didn't need to think about using this child to threaten him or improving her position through this child.

From the moment this child was born, it had no connection to her. He had only stayed in her womb for ten months. Once he grew up, he wouldn't remember. He would have spent more time with Qin-shi and considered her as his true mother. He would only call Du-shi fifth aunt instead of mom.

A servant girl gave the midwife money for helping with birth and

also gave her hush money. Although the midwife was curious, she also knew not to ask any questions. After she received the money, knowing her place, she quietly left through a corner gate.

Qin-shi asked, "Have you thought about the child's name? What would be a good name?"

In Chang Hong's generation, the male descendants' names in Duke Ying's family all started with "Chang" or "Gong".

Wei Kun thought about it and then decided, "Let's call him Chang Mi."

Mi had the meaning of unable to have. This child would be considered to have come here to make up for Du-shi's offences.

Qin-shi nodded. She saw that it was already dark outside, so she held the child to prepare to leave and said, "Chang Mi was prematurely born. At present, he is still in poor health. I'll bring him back to Plum Courtyard to raise him well, so be at ease.

Wei Kun nodded. He was reassured with leaving the child with Qin-shi. Qin-shi had done a good job in bringing up and educating her three children in manners and culture. Even the most mischievous Wei Chang Xian is more or less sensible at the critical moments. If she raises Wei Chang Mi, he will live better than if he was raised by Du-shi.

After he watched Qin-shi leave, he didn't stay here much longer. He instructed the two servant girls to take care of Du-shi, and then left with Wei Luo and Chang Hong.

Since Wei Zhang refused to leave and insisted on staying watching over Du-shi, Wei Kun let her have her way.

———

When Du-shi woke up the next day, it felt as if her entire body had been run over by a horse carriage. Her body ached and felt powerless.



She opened her eyes to see that it was the next morning and there wasn't anyone in the room, not even a servant girl to wait upon her. Her hoarse voice called out to summon servants.

In a short time, Hong Ya came inside and said, "Madam, you woke up?"

Du-shi thought there was something wrong. Her train of thought went round and round. She finally thought of something. With great difficulty, she managed to sit up.

She stared at Hong Ya and asked, "How's my child? Was it a boy or a girl? Where's my child?"

Hong Ya twisted her hands. She knew what happened. Wei Kun had already explained to them and wanted them to pass on the information to Du-shi.

Now that Du-shi was awake, Hong Ya felt hesitant to speak, "The baby was a young master. Madam, be at ease. He's doing well..."

Du-shi let out a relieved sigh. Hearing that it was a boy, Du-shi was unable to conceal her joy and she thought she had hope now.

"Where the child? Quickly bring him here to let me see. I haven't seen what he looks like yet."

Unfortunately, she wouldn't be able to see him...

Hong Ya didn't move for a while. She was in a difficult position.

Du-shi raised her eyebrows and said discontentedly, "Why are you still here? Did you not hear me?"

Hong Ya couldn't continue to keep concealing.

After she mulled over the issue, she truthfully said, "After madam gave birth to the young master, master named him Chang Mi. Master had already given the child to fourth madam to raise. After the child turns five, fourth madam will legally adopt him..." As she talked, Du-shi's face became pale.

She continued, "Master also said that you will continue to live in

Gingko Courtyard. If there isn't anything important, it would be best if you don't see young master's face..."

Du-shi felt as if she had been struck by a thunderbolt. Her ears only heard a buzzing sound. She didn't hear anything else that Hong Ya said. She felt this was inconceivable and difficult to believe...

He was her son. Why was he given to fourth madam to bring up? Why wasn't she allowed to see her son?!

Du-shi eyes became frenetic and her hands trembled. She didn't even put on her shoes before rushing outside.

Hong Ya hurriedly followed her and called out, "Madam! Madam, where are you going?"

At this point, Du-shi couldn't hear anything. She just wanted to see her child or ask Wei Kun what was happening. This was her son that she had carried in her womb for ten months and hadn't even seen once. Don't tell her that he would be given to someone else to raise. Wei Kun was so cold-blooded!

Du-shi staggered to Gingko Courtyard's entrance. Before she could step through the entrance, the swords of the two guards barred her way.

Without any expression, a guard said, "Madam, please return. Master has ordered that you're not allowed to leave Gingko Courtyard.

Du-shi tried to push them away. Unfortunately, there was a big contrast between the two parties. She wasn't able to move them the slightest amount. Her hair became messy in her struggle. She was only wearing a thin layer of inner clothes. Her eyes were red.

In spite of everything, she screamed, "I want to see Wei Kun. I want to see him... I want to see my son..."

The guard looked at her and mildly said, "Master has gone to the Imperial Hanlin Academy. He probably won't return until

nighttime.”

She stumbled back two steps and absent-mindedly dropped to the ground. For a long time, she held her face and cried bitterly. This was the first time she had lost all hope.

She thought that after she gave birth, she would have a chance to turn her situation around. She didn't expect that Wei Kun would be so heartless. He had stolen away her child and didn't even leave a stray thought about her.

## Chapter 34

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In the fourth branch's Plum Courtyard, Wei Luo and Chang Hong came to see this child who was only their younger brother by name. To be honest, Wei Luo was unable to afford to have any good feelings towards this child. Without even mentioned his evil actions and corrupt moral character in her previous life, the mere fact that he was Du-shi's son was enough for her to dislike him.

But, this visit couldn't be helped. Wei Kun wanted them to come here, so they had to make a token appearance.

Wei Chang Mi was still small and his body was weak. Qin-shi had arranged for him to temporarily live with her in the same room.

After they had passed through the doorway, they saw a rosewood cradle in the main room. Qin-shi was next to the cradle and tucking Wei Chang Mi into baby clothes. Behind her, there were two wet nurses dressed in plum purple clothing.

Wei Luo walked forward. She raised her tiptoes to look inside the cradle. She only saw a small, thin child with a bright red face. His compacted facial features and thin body didn't look good at all.

Qin-shi smiled and gestured for Chang Hong to come closer. She held Chang Hong up so he could also see the child.

She asked, "What do you think? Does your younger brother look nice?"

The two little brats said in unison, "So ugly."

Qin-shi couldn't resist letting out a burst of laughter, then she rubbed their heads and patiently explained, "Your little brother is still young. Newly born children all look like this. He'll slowly look better in the future."

Wei Luo didn't say anything. Regardless of what Wei Chang Mi looked liked in the future, she wouldn't like him. He had a mother with an evil heart. Regardless if he was innocent or not, he was

fated to not be liked.

Because the infant heard the sound of voices, he let out two cries for attention. It seemed like he had waken up. He rubbed his clenched fists against his cheeks, and then he slowly opened his eyes. His long and narrow eyes were very similar to Du-shi's. When he grew up, his eyes would look mean and harsh as if he was someone that would be difficult to get along with.

Right now, he looked at everyone with soft dark-colored eyes. His gaze stopped at Ah Luo and Chang Hong as if he was curious about them.

Ah Luo didn't like his gaze. She stretched out her hand to close them, but he gripped one of her fingers without any warning. Babbling, he brought her finger to his mouth and licked it! Wei Chang Mi put her thumb into his mouth.

Ah Luo was caught off guard and only widened her eyes in alarm. An infant's mouth was soft and wet and full of saliva. She quickly pulled her hand away.

Ah Luo shook her hand in distaste and said, "So disgusting..."

Wei Chang Mi didn't know he was being detested. He blinked his eyes and continued looking at Ah Luo.

Qin-shi started to laugh. As she laughed, she handed a handkerchief to Wei Luo to wipe her hand.

"It seems like Chang Mi really likes Ah Luo. He wants to eat your fingertip when he's only seen you once..."

Ah Luo showed an unhappy expression. How was this like? This was clearly malicious! He had covered her finger in saliva. So dirty.

As expected, this little fellow was like Du-shi in provoking dislike and disgust from others.

After Wei Luo finished wiping dry her finger, she retreated to the side. She wrinkled her little steamed bun face as she watched the

wet nurse feed Wei Chang Mi. Although Wei Chang Mi was thin and small, he wasn't the slightest bit hesitant as he was sucking up milk. She saw him bury his whole face into the wet nurse's chest and drank with keen interest. He wasn't full from one side, so the wet nurse shifted him to the other side. He drank for a while on that side before he was full.

He had such a big appetite.

Wei Luo held her check as she silently thought. She had seen Wei Chang Mi, so there wasn't a reason for them to stay. Just as Ah Luo decided to go back with Chang Hong, a person with phoenix eyes that was wearing deep purplish-red clothes and suede boots suddenly came inside the room in a rush.

It was Wei Zheng.

Wei Zheng's face was pale. Ah Luo didn't know if it was because of the windy weather outside or another reason. Wei Zheng stayed by the door as she huffed and puffed until she regained her breath, and then she looked around the room. Her eyes stopped at the infant held in Qin-shi's arms. Without saying a word, she ran over to them.

Qin-shi asked why Wei Zheng why she was here. Wei Chang pursed her lips and reached out to grab Wei Chang Mi!

In surprise, Qin-shi held the child tighter. However, Wei Zheng wouldn't let go.

Qin-shi was worried that they would accidentally injure the child by their tug of war, so she could only temporarily loosen her hold, but her tone of voice was strict, "Ah Zheng, what are you doing?"

After Wei Zheng had snatched away Wei Chang Mi, she wrathfully glared at the people in the room, "He's my younger brother. He's my mom's child, not yours! I'm going to bring him back to my mom.

Since Wei Zheng was still young, she didn't know how to

properly hold a baby, so Wei Chang Mi was very uncomfortable. He was only an infant. When he was uncomfortable, there was only one way he could express it. Crying. Wei Chang Mi loudly cried without stopping in her arms. His cries were heartbreaking.

Qin-shi hurriedly walked forward and said, “Chang Mi is crying. Give him to the wet nurse quickly. Be good Ah Zheng. Your younger brother is still small. If you hold him like that, he’ll get hurt...”

Wei Zheng shook her head, tightly held the infant, and said, “I won’t. I won’t give him to you. My mom is very heart-broken without my younger brother. She was crying!” After she said this, she turned around to go outside. Wei Chang Mi had cried until he was out of breath. He impatiently looked at Qin-shi with a pitiful expression.

Qin-shi hurriedly gestured for the servant girls to stop Wei Zheng. But, Wei Zheng’s body was small and her movements were nimble. She ducked her head and avoided the servant girls’ hands.

Seeing that Wei Zheng was about to reach the porch, Qin-shi became angry. Just as she was about to tell a servant to go inform Wei Kun, she saw Wei Zheng suddenly stopping.

Qin-shi questionably walked forward. When she reached Wei Zheng, she saw the reason.

Since Wei Chang Mi had just finished drinking milk and was held uncomfortably, he had vomited up the milk. This little fellow’s vomited milk was all over Wei Zheng’s neck and clothes. Knowing that Qin-shi was near, he babbled and cried.

Qin-shi took Wei Chang into her arms and looked at the completely dismayed Wei Zheng.

Without a better option, she told the servant girls, “Bring fifth miss inside and change her clothes. In the future, when fifth miss visits Plum Courtyard, notify me first.”

The servant girls led Wei Zheng away.

From not far away, Ah Luo couldn't hold back her laughter anymore as she was leaving. She held her stomach as she laughed. Her laughter was melodious and clear and her smile was bright.

Wei Zheng turned around to fiercely glare at her in humiliation and anger.

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When Wei Kun returned from Imperial Hanlin Academy, it was dusk. The multicolored sunset was brilliant. The red and orange radiance was scattered over the glazed roof tiles. The entire Duke Ying's residence was enveloped inside the rising, rosy clouds.

He had heard from the servants about the situation in Ginkgo Courtyard. After he changed his official clothes and put on purple cashmere clothing, he decided to go there to look.

Ginkgo Courtyard had been noisy for a day. It was finally quiet now. But, it was quiet to point of excessiveness as if there was no life inside and the courtyard was showing depression.

After he walked into Du-shi's room and passed the room divider that was decorated with four joyful magpies, he saw her sitting on the ground as if she had lost her soul. Her hair was disheveled and her clothes were thin. She only had a cloak wrapped around her clothes.

At this time, it was winter. Although there was a burning brazier in the room, it must have been ice cold on the ground. But, she seemed totally unaware as if she had lost the ability to think. Her tears had dried. She only had desperation and emptiness left.

Du-shi's head was lowered. Suddenly, a pair of snow-covered shoes appeared. The shoes were embroidered with golden thread. She raised her head and looked at Wei Kun without joy or sorrow. She thought she had finished crying, but her tears started again.

She crawled towards Wei Kun, grabbed his hand, and begged



him, “Master, Chang Mi is the baby I carried for ten months. You can’t treat me like this... fourth elder sister-in-law already has three sons. Chang Mi will suffer and be at a disadvantage if he goes there. I’m begging you to return my child. He’s my son... He’s my son...”

Even now, she would think badly of other people. She absolutely hadn’t reflected upon her own questionable actions.

Wei Kun looked down at her with an unclear expression and asked, “Your heart aches for Chang Mi?”

Du-shi repeatedly nodded. He was her son. How could her heart not ache?! It had only been one day, but she had thought countless time if he was living well. Did he cry? Did he cause trouble? Was fourth elder sister-in-law treating him well? Did she treat him harshly? The more she thought, the more helpless she felt. The more she thought, the more she felt pained.

Wei Kun nodded and asked, “Have you thought how I would feel when you were selling Ah Luo to slave traders?”

She was taken back by his words. Shortly after, she suddenly realized. This was revenge. He wanted her to feel the pain of being separated from her flesh and blood. She opened her mouth, but had no words to say. She was aware that she should be admitting her mistake right now, but the words didn’t come out...

She tightly held Wei Kun’s hand and hoped that he would think about their long marriage and forgive her this one time.

Unfortunately, this wouldn’t happen and Wei Kun serenely said, “Fourth elder sister-in-law will treat Chang Mi very well. You don’t need to worry about this. Set your mind at rest and continue living here. Don’t think about him again. Pretend that you only had a long dream and that you never gave birth to this child.”

She looked at him with a total lost in spirit. For a short time, she forgot how to speak. How could she forget? When she was sent to

Gingko Courtyard, she only had Chang Mi for company. When she had nothing to do, she would talk to him. He was her only hope! Now that she didn't even have this hope, dying was better than continuing to live.

Du-shi begged him, "Let me see him, just one glance. I've never seen him..."

Wei-Kun took his hand back, walked back a step, and said, "At the moment, I can't let you see him. Chang Mi is in poor health. He needs to be carefully tended. When he is one month old, I'll arrange for you to see him."

Du-shi's face turned black, "One month?"

Wei Kun said, "If you don't want to see him, that's okay too."

She quickly replied that she wanted to see him. One month then. As long as she could see her child, anything would be okay.

After Wei Kun left, she recovered some of her senses. She endlessly comforted herself. One month wasn't long. It would past in the blink of an eye. At that time, she would be reunited with Wei Chang Mi. What did her son look like? Did he think about her? As she thought about this, she felt happy and sad. She started to cry again.

She scarcely realized that a child's feelings were the most straightforward. Although she was Wei Chang Mi's biological mother, he had spent the past month living with Qin-shi.

A month later, Wei Chang Mi didn't recognize her at all. He was only close to Qin-shi.

———

On the third day of the twelfth lunar month, it was Wei Chang Mi's one month birthday. It was also Wei Zhang Chun's sixtieth birthday. Wei Zhang Chun and his wife, Luo-shi, decided to have a big banquet to celebrate his birthday and Wei Chang Mi's one month birthday together. (T/N: Just in case it's confusing, Duke

Ying is Wei Zhang Chun's title.)

This occasion was bustling with noise and excitement. Duke Ying's residence was full of people. There were court ministers and nobles. These people all had good relationships with Duke Ying. Before the banquet had started, there were so many carriages at the front of Duke Ying's residence's gate that they obstructed the rest of the street. The gatekeepers led the guests to the receiving room. The womenfolk passed through a long corridor that was next to a garden on their way to the reception pavilion.

Around noon, the guests invited by Duke Yin had arrived. Only one person was missing. They had thought he wouldn't be coming.

As they were about to start the banquet, a servant informed, "Old master, Prince Jing has arrived."

# Chapter 35

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Wei Luo was wearing a blue-green top embroidered with small golden flowers and a white silk skirt. On top of this, she had a snow white fox fur cloak. Flower buds had been combed into her hair. From far away, she looked like an exquisite, sparkling, and translucent little snowball.

She had come to the reception pavilion from Pine Courtyard. The reception pavilion was already full of women. Most importantly, first madam and fourth madam were here to receive the guests.

Old madam had been in bad health for the past few years, so she had given some of Duke Ying's residence's accounts and business to the dignified first madam to manage. First madam had done her work clearly and orderly. Her punishments and rewards were fair and the residence's servants followed her orders faithfully. Old madam was very satisfied with her. Recently, old madam had made the decision to hand over the entire management of the residence to the first madam to manage.

At present, there were many young girls in the reception pavilion. One by one, first madam arranged for a place for them to sit, ordered the servant girls to serve tea and snacks, and handled everything else.

Behind a wooden folding screen that was inlaid with numerous treasures designed to look like birds and flowers, fourth madam Qin-shi was holding sixth young master Wei Chang Mi to meet everyone. After one month under her care, Wei Chang Mi had become much rounder and rosier compared to when he was just born.

His facial features had opened up to reveal a cute face. His eyes were like Du-shi's. His nose and mouth were like Wei Kun's. He could be considered quite nice-looking. His face wasn't like a scrunched up little monkey's face anymore and his personality was

relatively lively and bold. He didn't cry or fuss when meeting strangers. Instead, he would only curiously stare at them.

However, there was an exception. As soon as Wei Zheng was near him, he would start to cry loudly. It was probably because of that time when Wei Zheng uncomfortably held him after he was recently born. Even now, he still remembered. So much so that whenever he saw Wei Zheng, he would be scared.

In contrast, he really liked being near Wei Luo. They didn't know what was wrong with him. Wei Chang Mi would always beam with delight as soon as he saw Wei Luo. He would stretch his hands towards her and start babbling at her. He also liked to grab her fingers towards his mouth to lick.

Wei Luo truly disliked this behavior. After he nibbled on her fingers, she would wash her hand many times. If she didn't let him nibble, he would cry. Were all children so troublesome? Or was it because he was Du-shi's son, so he was extremely annoying?

Wei Chang Mi didn't know her train of thought. From Qin-shi's arms, he wiggled out his head. As soon as he saw her, his eyes brightened, his mouth babbled, and his hands were stretched out towards her.

Ah Luo subconsciously took a step back and hid both of her hands behind her back.

Qin-shi saw this and smiled. She beckoned with her hand at Ah Luo to come closer.

"Ah Luo hasn't seen Chang Mi for several days, right? Come here to look at your younger brother..."

Wei Luo shook her head like a drum-shaped rattle toy.

"I don't want to see him. He'll eat my hand."

Qin-shi explained with a smile, "That's because he likes you."

But, why would he like her? She never expressed any goodwill or

kindness towards him. Wei Luo pursed her lips. She couldn't figure it out. Instead of walking forward, she looked at Wei Chang Mi from a distance.

Since today was Wei Chang Mi's one month birthday, the womenfolk's attention was focused on him. Everyone knew that a new young master had been recently born in Duke Ying's residence. It was fifth branch's child, but why was this child with fourth madam? Why didn't they see fifth madam?

Qin-shi had explained to everyone, "Fifth younger brother's wife's was unhealthy after giving birth. So far, she can't leave her bed and has been in her courtyard recuperating. I'm afraid she won't be able to meet everyone today.

After everyone heard this, they said they could understand. The madams in attendance had all given birth before. Some of them even offered their favorite postnatal remedies.

Qin-shi faintly smiled as she listened. She didn't say any extra words.

———

Liang Yurong pulled Wei Luo behind a yellow rosewood tree, and then she mysteriously asked Wei Luo, "Is that your stepmother's son?"

Liang Yurong had come here with her mother, Lady Marquis Pingyuan. Lady Marquis Pingyuan Zhen Lan was Jiang Miao Lan's sworn sister. Their friendship had been very deep. If she didn't have to attend Duke Ying's sixty-birthday banquet, she most likely wouldn't have come here today. Since Zhen Lan's relationship with Jiang Miao Lan had been very good, then naturally, it goes without saying, she didn't want to see Du-shi's child.

At this moment, she was sitting far away on a rosewood chair. She had the cool eyes of a bystander without any happy expression.

"En." Wei Luo nodded.

Liang Yurong turned to look at the child held by Qin-shi.

After a short while, she turned back to say her evaluation, “He looks ugly.”

Liang Yurong didn’t know about Du-shi’s previous actions, but in the eyes of children, all stepmothers were bad people with malicious hearts and evil schemes. Although Liang Yurong was the person who said these words, it was heavily based on someone else’s prejudice.

Wei Luo didn’t refute her words. It could be considered as an acceptance.

One after another, each of the madams held Wei Chang Mi. The person holding Wei Chang Mi would say a few auspicious words before handing him over to the next person. They also presented their previously prepared gifts afterwards. Since the child was being taken care of by Qin-shi, she would also handle these gifts. She ordered the servant girls to receive them and took Wei Chang Mi back into her arms.

Smiling, Qin-shi said, “I’ll thank the madams on behalf of Chang Mi.”

As long as you gave something that showed kindly intentions, the gifts for a child didn’t need to be too expensive. These gifts were mostly jade ornaments to bless the child with good fortune or to bless the parents with more sons for more happiness, or various silver longevity charms for children. These gifts were dazzling, but also stereotyped and repetitive.

Lady Marquis Pingyuan didn’t hold Wei Chang Mi or prepared a present. She only uttered a polite “congratulation” when it was her turn.

Qin-shi looked at her without any blame, but with understanding instead.

Fortunately, there were many people and not many people cared

about this brief interlude. Not long after, someone came by to say that Duke Ying was about to start his banquet, please go to the receiving room.

Everyone stood up and followed old madam and first madam to the receiving room.

Qin-shi didn't follow them. Lady Marquis Pingyuan also didn't go.

Zhen Lan calmly sat on the rosewood chair for a long time. Her conduct was very dignified. She seemed as if there was something she wanted to say to Qin-shi. But, Qin-shi didn't have time to entertain her. Just as she was thinking about ways to persuade her to go, outside the entrance, a person was impatiently following a servant girl here.

This was first time she saw her child. Someone else was holding him. It felt like a knife was being twisted in her heart. It felt like someone was continuously gouging out pieces of her flesh. It hurt so much that she couldn't breathe.

So, this was what her child looked like. His eyebrows were slightly sparse. His eyes were big. His mouth was small...

She didn't know how she was able to wait this past month. She spent every day painfully. But, amidst the pain, there was hope. She kept telling herself that soon she would be able to see Chang Mi and be able to hold her child. It was these thoughts that supported her until now.

Now that she saw him. She thought that waiting a month was worth it.

Without any warning, Du-shi ran to Qin-shi. She ignored Qin-shi's attempt at stopping her and forcibly took the child from her! Du-shi held Chang Mi. She unwrapped his swaddling clothes to look at his eyebrows, eyes, and nose... She looked and looked at him. Tears came falling out of her eyes.



Her body trembled and she called out, “Chang Mi, I’m your mom. Look at me...”

Wei Chang Mi had never seen her before. Originally, he was somewhat curious and looked at her with gleaming black eyes. As Du-shi gradually held him tighter, he felt increasingly pained. Adding on Du-shi unending tears that fell on his tender little face and her crazy appearance that scared him, his little mouth opened to cry loudly.

The more he cried, the more Du-shi panicked. She held him and coaxed, “Don’t cry. Chang Mi, don’t cry... Mom’s heart will break...”

But, this was useless. Wei Chang cried harder. He stretched his hands towards Qin-shi. He wanted to escape from Du-shi’s arms.

At this moment, Qin-shi didn’t have time to care that Lady Marquis Pingyuan was also there.

She walked forward to persuade, “Fifth younger brother’s wife, Chang Mi is a bit unfamiliar with you, give him to me to hold for now.”

It was probably because these words provoked Du-shi, she suddenly retreated a step back and held the infant tighter as she said, “I’m his biological mother. How could he be unfamiliar with me?”

Then she changed the topic and resolutely said, “I won’t give him to you. Don’t even think about it!” As she said this, she retreated towards the door as if she was prepared to escape with Wei Chang Mi at any moment.

She was originally only allowed to see him this one time. But now that she saw him, greedy thoughts were born. She couldn’t be satisfied with one glance. She regretted agreeing and wanted to bring Chang Mi back to her own courtyard. She didn’t want him to be given to someone else again.

Wei Chang Mi had cried his throat hoarse. His hands reached out to search for Qin-shi. Du-shi's saw this and felt heartache.

She callously pressed his hands back and said without stopping, "Chang Mi, look clearly. I'm the one that's your mother... I was the one who gave birth to you. Your birth took an entire day. Why are you looking for her?"

But, how could a one-month-old child understand this? He only knew what was and wasn't comfortable and what scared him. As for who gave birth to him, it wasn't important to him at all.

Qin-shi used her eyes to signal to the older female servants at the doorway. Just as Du-shi turned around, the four older female servants blocked her way and stopped her from leaving!

Wei Kun had expected that Du-shi wouldn't keep her promise. He had already prepared in advance. The four older female servants were there to prevent her.

These four older female servants practiced martial arts. They were very strong. Two of them restrained Du-shi's hands and the other two snatched Wei Chang Mi from her.

Du-shi couldn't move a single step. She could only watch as they returned Chang Mi to Qin-shi. Tears streamed down from her eyes.

Sorrowfully and inconsolably, she said "Give him to me. Give him back to me..."

Qin-shi hardened her heart and pretended she didn't hear anything.

She ordered the four servants, "Bring fifth madam back to Gingko Courtyard using the small paths. Don't let other people see."

Qin-shi paused, and then said to Du-shi, "If fifth sister-in-law didn't cause trouble, you would have been able to spend more time with him. Never mind. At any rate, you've seen him. Be at ease. Fifth brother-in-law has entrusted Chang Mi with me. I'll carefully

nurture and educate him. Although I already have sons, I won't treat him unfairly. You don't need worry about this point."

After she said these words, the older female servants took Du-shi away.

While Du-shi was led away, her gaze was glued on Wei Chang Mi. How could one glance be enough? He was her son. Even if she looked at him a hundred times, it wouldn't be enough. They only let her see him once!

But, because of this one time, she was even more desperate than before.

After Wei Chang Mi was given to Qin-shi, he quickly stopped crying. His body was even lying against her chest and rubbing against it. His posture and attitude was intimate as if Qin-shi was the mother that had given birth to him.

What made Du-shi even sadder was that Wei Chang Mi had tightly grabbed onto one of Wei Luo's fingers with a serene expression and without any of the fear that he had when she was holding him.

Wei Luo stood next to Qin-shi and smiled at Du-shi. Her smile had ridicule and also pity, but there wasn't any mercy.

Du-shi was so sad that she wanted to die. Bitterness rose up in her throat.

To have to be separated after meeting, it would have been better if she had never saw him. This feeling was worse than dying.

———

Fourth aunt and Lady Marquis Pingyuan were talking inside the reception pavilion. Wei Luo and Liang Yurong walked outside. They walked side by side towards the dooryard's veranda.

They both had just witnessed that scene. Liang Yurong was somewhat curious. Why couldn't fifth madam raise her own son?

Why was her son given to fourth madam to raise? And even with a glance, she could tell that fifth madam was broken down. In her previous impressions, fifth madam was a woman strong on the outside, but weak inside. She didn't expect that in a short time period, she would become like this. But this was Wei Luo's family matter, so she resisted asking. From her sleeve, she took something out to give to Wei Luo.

"Ah Luo, look. My older brother had bought this sachet on the street. He bought two of them, this one is for you."

It was sachet made with golden thread. Inside the sachet, there were dried flower petals and spices. The simple and unobtrusive sweet scent smelled very good. As she spoke, she tied it to Ah Luo's waist.

She walked back two steps to look, and then said in satisfaction, "Looks very nice."

Wei Luo smiled, fiddled with it, and thanked her.

Liang Yurong said it was nothing and walked forward to hold Ah Luo's hand and said, "We should hurry. The banquet will be over if we get there later."

Ah Luo nodded and followed her.

Outside the veranda, one by one, there were snowflakes gently fluttering downwards. The amount of snow falling wasn't much. It melted before touching the ground.

They didn't walk far before seeing a figure underneath a pine tree ahead of them. This person seemed purer than snow. He looked refined and free from vulgarity, but his figure also looked lonely.

Liang Yurong suddenly stopped to look in that direction, "Ah Luo, is that your older cousin?"

Wei Luo followed her gaze. It was older cousin Wei Chang Yin. He was sitting by himself underneath the tree and attentively

looking forward. She didn't know what he was thinking about. The snowflakes hovered around him. Some fell on his head and shoulders. He didn't rush in brushing them off. His head was slightly bowed. The slanted view of his fragile face was very nice looking. His face was sketched in light shades like a landscape painting. It wasn't very deep, but it warmed the heart and delighted the eyes.

Wei Luo said yes. Before Wei Luo had time to stop Liang Yurong, she had run over there. When she arrived in front of Wei Chang Yin, she loudly called out big brother and broke the tranquil scene.

Wei Chang Yin returned to his senses and looked at her from one side.

His eyebrows smoothed out and he revealed a good-natured smile, "Is something wrong?"

Ling Yurong blushed and pointed at his hair, "It's snowing. Why are you sitting here? Your head is covered in snow. If you stay like this, you're going to get sick." After she said this, she noticed his wheelchair and her face showed that she had realized something.

She felt somewhat ashamed and said, "Is it because there's no one to push you? I'll help you. Are you going to the receiving room too? Ah Luo and I are also going there." As she said this, she went behind Wei Chang Yin. Her small hands did their best to push the back of the chair, but it didn't move. The wheelchair was very heavy. With only her small strength, she couldn't move it at all.

Wei Chang Yin involuntarily laughed. He thanked her and asked her to come back to his front.

"I'm waiting for someone. Thank you for your good intentions. What's your name?" He reached out to brush off the snow from her head.

Liang Yurong looked at him and muddling said, "I'm called Liang Yurong. My daddy is Marquis Pingyuan."

He nodded, and then looked at Wei Luo who wasn't far away and asked, "Are you Ah Luo's good friend?"

Liang Yurong affirmatively agreed, but after she thought about it, she corrected, "We're like sisters."

Wei Chang Yin slightly smiled and didn't say anything else.

Underneath the verandah, Wei Luo watched their movements and had conflicting emotions. Because she knew their future, she didn't want them to be close. As she was considering whether or not to go forward to stop them, she suddenly saw a person falling down from the sky and flipping over. He had appeared in front of her without any warning!

He was wearing deep black clothing and his face looked unfamiliar. Although he was dressed like a guard, he wasn't one of the guards from Duke Ying's residence.

Wei Luo took a step back without thinking. The man walked forward and without saying a word, he picked her up. He covered her mouth and jumped over a wall to go another courtyard. Before leaving, the guard looked directly at Wei Chang Yin and nodded. These two clearly knew each other.

Liang Yurong was stunned watching this scene, "Ah Luo..."

Wei Chang Yin stroked her head and conformed her, "Don't worry. He won't hurt Ah Luo."

The guard went over another wall to reach one of Duke Ying's residence's smaller courtyards with a bamboo forest. The paths here were secluded and usually, very few people came here. Ah Luo also rarely came here and she felt uneasy.

She prepared to scream for help when the guard put her down, but when she looked up, she saw a familiar person sitting in front of her.

Zhao Jie was wearing black clothing embroidered with golden serpents. He was calmly and composedly sitting on a stone bench.

His hand was supporting his head and he was leisurely looking at her. His eyes were smiling. Clearly, he was the one who prompted the guard to bring her here.

Wei Luo's petal-like mouth was slightly gaping. Her face showed her astonishment.

Did he kidnap her in her own home? Was there no justice or laws? Was he so arrogant that nothing mattered to him? She didn't care why he was looking for her. She mustered up her courage and turned her head to leave.

## Chapter 36

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The guard blocked her path and explained, “Fourth miss, our prince has something he wants to say to you.”

This guard was Yang Hao. He had been hiding in Duke Ying’s residence for almost three months. He had long become familiar with this residence’s topography. He was strong and healthy and his martial art skills were outstanding. During these three months, no one had discovered him. Even Wei Luo didn’t know that her every movement was being monitored.

Wei Luo could only stop walking and turn around to look at Zhao Jie.

Her small face was prim and proper when she said, “What does big brother want to say to me? Why did you bring me here? If someone discovers that I’m missing, daddy will worry.”

Zhao Jie stood up and told her to come closer, “I heard that you grew your adult tooth, so I came here give you a congratulatory present.”

Wei Luo blinked and looked at him in puzzlement.

Today, there were two reasons for the banquet at Duke Ying’s residence. One reason was Duke Ying’s sixty birthday. The second reason was Wei Chang Mi’s one month old birthday. Neither of these reasons had anything to do with her. Why was he giving her a gift? “Grew her adult tooth” What a ridiculously offensive reason. Was he really not deliberately teasing her?

But no matter what his reason was, it was still a happy occasion to receive a gift. Wei Luo looked up. Her small face was surrounded by the white fur from the hood of her cloak.

Her beautiful face seemed as if it was carved out of white jade, “What gift?”

Zhao Jie thought she looked a little bit adorable and reached his



hand out to scratch her nose, “What do you want?”

Wei Luo wanted to roll her eyes, but answered the question in a way that would attract people’s affection, “As long as it’s given by big brother Prince Jing, Ah Luo will like it.”

What a clever and quick-witted child! Zhao Jie couldn’t help laughing softly.

From his sleeve, he took out a bag embroidered with persimmon stems and handed it over to her, “For you.”

Wei Luo received it and pinched the bag with her fingers. There was something hard inside, but she couldn’t guess what was it was.

She curiously asked, “Can I open it to look?”

Zhao Jie nodded to express that she could.

She lowered her head and untied the red string. From inside the bag, she took out a circular reddish orange jade pendant that was completely transparent. It was bright and glimmering. One look showed that it was good jade. But why did he give her a jade pendant? Ah Luo tilted her head and swayed the item back and forth in the palm of her hand

“Big brother, what kind of jade pendant is this?”

Zhao Jie took the jade from her hand and had her stand in front of him. As he leaned over to help her wear it on her neck, he explained, “This is called hong yu. When you wear it in winter, it’ll heat up and keep you warm, so you won’t fall sick as easily.”

Wei Luo obediently stood there without moving. At first the jade pendant was cold as it hanged from her neck, but afterwards, it started to gradually become warmer. The mild heat was very comfortable. She looked at Zhao Jie with a pleasantly surprised expression.

Her round eyes curved as she smiled, “It really does heat up.”

When Zhao Jie leaned over to tie the jade pendant, he was very

close to her. After he was done, he looked at her with clear full moon eyes.

His lips were slightly curved and he asked with a gentle voice, "Do you like it?"

She nodded and looked at him to say, "I like it."

Liking was the correct answer. This jade pendant was a difficult to find treasure. When he had been dispatched to Wurong, he had relied on this jade pendant to keep himself warm. Wurong was in the northwest. Once it was winter, it was devastatingly cold. People would often freeze to death.

He had worn this jade pendant for three years. And now that he gave it to her, he didn't feel any regret.

During this period of time, he had been listening to Yang Hao report about the situation in Duke Ying's residence, and he understood what was going on. Wei Luo's stepmother had given birth to a son that had been given to fourth madam to raise. Wei Kun was powerless and incapable. He couldn't provide Wei Luo a peaceful and stable environment to grow up in, so Zhao Jie could only secretly lend him a helping hand. In his eyes, Du-shi and Liu-shi were only droplets in the sea. Once he finished off Liu-shi's parents' family, his next target would be Count Zhongyi's family.

When he thought of the arranged marriage between Count Zhongyi's Song Hui and Wei Luo, Zhao Jie paused for a moment. He wondered if Wei Luo would blame him when the time came. But, never mind. That wasn't important. When she grew up, he would find her a better husband. Song Hui's qualifications weren't very outstanding.

After he turned over this plan in his mind, Zhao Jie looked at the delicate little dumpling face in front of him.

He said this as if the thought had just occurred to him, "Ah Luo, this prince's birthday is next month."

Wei Luo was confused. Why was he telling her this? Should she say an early birthday greeting to him?

He rubbed her head, "At that time, this prince will send you an invitation. Do you know what is meant by proper behavior is based on reciprocity?"

So what he means is that since he gave her a gift, she has to give him a gift too?

Wei Luo already knew that there weren't free lunches in the world. After such a roundabout way, this was his original intention! She dragged out a soft "oh". Since he had already spoken, she couldn't refuse.

"What does big brother want as a gift? Ah Luo will give it."

Zhao Jie used her previous words to reply, "As long as it's given by Ah Luo, this prince will like it."

Wei Luo, "..."

Fine, she was only a child. Her gifts didn't need to be too expensive. It would be okay if she casually prepared a gift. It wasn't a difficult task. Other than this, there wasn't anything else he needed to say to her, right?

Zhao Jie seemed to be able to see through her thoughts. He got up and said, "Let's go. The banquet should have started. It wouldn't be good if we were too late."

Wei Luo followed him out of the courtyard. As they walked, she looked in the direction of the verandah. Wei Chang Yin and Liang Yurong had already disappeared. She didn't know where they went.

The bits and pieces of snowflakes were still unceasingly falling down. In a short time, they covered the ground in a thin layer of snow. Wei Luo stepped down on it and left behind a small footprint.

A pair of large and small footprints was left behind as they walked to the front of the residence. They finally stopped at the entrance to the receiving room.

Coincidentally, Wei Kun was going outside. When he saw the two of them, he sighed in relief.

“Your highness, where did you go? The servants looked everywhere for you.” He lowered his head to ask Wei Luo, “Ah Luo, why are you with his highness Prince Jing?”

Zhao Jie took off his overcoat that was embroidered with golden serpents and handed it to Yang Hao, then he explained, “This prince was walking around and ended up being lost in a courtyard with a bamboo forest. Luckily, I met Ah Luo. She guided this prince out.”

As Wei Kun listened, he suddenly realized, “The Bamboo Courtyard had been deserted for a long time. Usually, very few people pass through there. Your highness suffered a grievance.”

After he said this, he made a gesture to invite him inside, “The banquet has started. Please go inside your highness. My father has been waiting for you.”

Zhao Jie moved forward a step to go inside. When he had walked two steps, he turned his head to look at Wei Luo who was still standing at the doorway. He raised his lips in slight smile, didn’t say anything, and then continued walking inside.

But, Wei Luo understood his meaning. He was clearly reminding her, don’t forget “courtesy demands reciprocity”.

After today’s birthday celebrations, Wei Luo realized something.

She had a deep impression of Du-shi’s desperation when she was taken away. If Wei Chang Mi was intimate with them, would she feel hopeless? If in the future Wei Chang Mi only acknowledged Qin-shi as his mother and not her, would she feel even more hopeless and desperate? As a mother, she probably couldn’t handle

this type of attack.

After Wei Luo figured this out, she slightly changed her attitude towards Wei Chang Mi.

Although she still didn't like to see him, she wouldn't show the disgust on her face. After all, fourth aunt was now raising him. If she showed prejudice towards him, fourth aunt would feel bad. Whenever she saw Wei Chang Mi, she didn't have to fawn over him, the little fellow already liked her very much. As long as she didn't reject him and occasionally squeezed his small hand, he would babble happily.

From that point of view, he wasn't that annoying.

Because Wei Chang Mi had a good relationship with Wei Luo, Wei Zheng would look at him angrily every time she saw him. She probably thought he was a little traitor.

For example, when the entire family was eating a meal together in the receiving room, while the wet nurse was holding Wei Chang Mi, he would wink at Wei Luo and stick out his tongue from time to time. Young children do these actions without any intention. He wasn't even aware of these subconscious facial expressions himself. But, Wei Zheng thought he wanted to be closed to Wei Luo. She pursed her lips and angrily looked at Wei Chang Mi with menacing intentions.

Wei Chang Mi became frightened from her glare. He hid his face in the wet nurse's chest and started crying.

Wei Zheng was also young and her heart was anxious. She didn't know how to deal with babies and thought that threatening him would work. She didn't expect that this action would be the same as shooting herself in the foot.

His relationship with Wei Zheng was like a rolling snowball that continued to deteriorate at an out of control rate. To the extent that now, Wei Chang Mi would be scared as soon as he saw her and

subconsciously avoided contact with her.

The wet nurse went behind a screen to comfort Chang Mi. Wei Zheng sat on the stool with her lips tightly pursed and at a complete loss of what to do next.

During this period of time, Wei Zheng went to see Du-shi in Ginkgo Courtyard every day. Since the time that Du-shi had seen Wei Chang Mi, she thought about him every moment. But, Wei Kun wouldn't allow her to meet him again. She seemed as if she had lost her soul and all desires. Every day, she was absent-minded and lost in a trance. Every night, she would call out Chang Mi's name.

But Chang Mi? He happily got along with Qin-shi and Wei Luo. He simply didn't know that he had a biological mother that longed to see him.

How could daddy be so cruel? Wei Zheng put down her chopsticks and resisted the urge to cry.

"I'm finished eating." She turned around and left the receiving room. She hid underneath the porch and cried out her unhappy feelings.

———

The end of the year arrived quickly. From top to bottom, Duke Ying's residence was decorated with lanterns and colorful banners in preparation to celebrate the New Year.

On New Year's Eve, Wei Luo and Wei Chang Hong sat together in the central house to wait for the New Year. As they waited and waited, they started to become drowsy. In the end, Wei Kun took them back to their rooms.

The three days after New Years were very lively. Wei Kun had brought the three kids to Count Zhongyi's residence and also several officials' homes. Wei Luo received many red envelopes. Every night, she would count up her money with a scrooge-like

style.

Jin Lu couldn't resist laughing at her, "Miss, don't you have boxes of third madam's jewelry? Why do you care about this small amount of money?"

Wei Luo shook her head and offered a different view, "That isn't the same. I can't you use those jewelry now. Once I'm grown up, I'll use them to nicely adorn myself. Although this money isn't much, I can use it anytime I want to buy whatever I want."

Jin Lu resisted smiling and perfunctorily said, "Miss's words are reasonable."

Wei Luo flattened her lips and didn't continue to explain. In two more days, it would Zhao Jie's birthday. What should she give as a gift? This was such a headache. His gift required money and her energy. If she had known earlier, she wouldn't have accepted that jade pendant.

She lied on her bed to think about this for a while. Her two legs swung around as she thought. After a long time, she still couldn't think of a good idea.

———

On January sixth, for Prince Jing's birthday celebration, there were many important guests. Duke Ying's family was also on the invitation list.

After Duke Ying's family had finished preparing, they had left for Prince Jing's residence early in the morning.

This was Prince Jing's first birthday after he had return to the capital. Everyone racked their brains and spent a lot time to give a gift that would hopefully gain Zhao Jie's favor. Every person who entered his residence had to hand over an invitation and a birthday present. The gifts were resplendent.

There were precious stones carved into Guanyin (goddess of mercy), famous paintings... One by one, the prince's steward

accepted each item, recorded it in the account books, and sent it to be stored in a warehouse.

At this time, Zhao Jie was wearing a deep black robe embroidered with auspicious patterns and leisurely practicing writing.

It wasn't time yet. He wasn't in a hurry to go to the receiving room. It would be fine to let everyone wait for a bit.

Shortly after, the steward came inside after knocking on the door. With an odd expression, he said, "Your highness..."

Zhao Jie didn't look up and asked, "What's the matter?"

The steward said, "Duke Ying's residence sent a large-sized gift. They asked that you personally open it... This subordinate worries that there's something wrong about this and didn't immediately agree. This subordinate came here to ask for instructions. What do you want done?"

Zhao Jie stopped writing and tilted his head, "It was sent by Duke Ying's residence?"

The steward nodded.

His lips lifted up in a smile. He thought of the words that he said to Wei Luo in the Bamboo Courtyard. Surely, this large gift was that girl's idea.

He paused for a moment, and then said, "Bring it over here for this prince to see."

The steward nodded, and then retreated.

In a moment, two guards brought over a red sandalwood box engraved with water lilies. The box was half the height of a person.

They saluted and said, "Your highness, please look."

Zhao Jie stood up from the chair and slowly walked to the front of the box.

This was a truly a big gift. He wondered what that little girl



prepared. He paused in his movement, and then slowly bent over. He unlatched the lid of the red sandalwood box with his hands. Click. The box opened.

He froze. And then he lifted up the lid.

There was a beautiful young girl curled up inside the box. Her eyes were closed. Her thick eyelashes were beneath her eyes like a pair of delicate and small fans. She had probably fallen asleep on the journey here. She wasn't awake yet. Her white and tender cheeks were slightly red. Her small mouth was slightly open, but her sleep wasn't that deep. Her hands rubbed her eyes as if she was about to wake up.

# Chapter 37

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Zhao Jie stood by the red sandalwood box. He blankly looked at her without moving.

Wei Luo slowly opened her pitch-black eyes. The way she looked around the room was charming. The clear reflection of her eyes was like spring water. She seemed half awake and half asleep. At the moment, she couldn't even tell what night it was. She came back to her senses after a while and slowly sat up in the box.

She saw Zhao Jie and childishly called out, "Big brother."

The other people in the study were also stunned. How could there be a young girl hidden inside the box? And it was such a beautiful little girl. Who gave her to Prince Jing?

Zhao Jie recovered his senses and smiled with a hint of amusement, "Ah Luo, are you giving yourself to this prince?"

She blinked her eyes as if he had said something odd.

Who wanted to give herself to him? In his dreams!

Wei Luo held up the hua tiao puppy that she had been holding in her arms to Zhao Jie, "This is your gift. He's too little to stay inside a box by himself without fussing, so I came with him to keep him company."

(T/N: Hua tiao is a Chinese dog breed.)

Hearing these words, everyone noticed the hua tiao that had been hidden in her arms. Because he was too small, at most he was only one month old, he didn't catch anyone's attention until now. After she had taken the puppy out, he quietly whimpered. At this, everyone finally showed expressions of understanding. So it was like that... As expected, which family would have been willing to part with such a beautiful child to give to their prince who had a reputation of being the most ruthless and vicious?

Zhao Jie stared at the dog for a moment. The smile on his face had slowly faded to an intrigued expression, “Why are you giving this prince this?”

Of course, Wei Luo wouldn't tell him it was because her third older cousin's dog recently had puppies.

Her expression didn't change and her heart rate didn't increase when she said, “Because hua tiao have awe-inspiring authority like big brother Prince Jing.”

In truth, it was because she was being lazy. She couldn't think of what to give him. Just at the right time, Wei Chang Yin's hua tiao gave birth to a litter of puppies, so she took advantage of the situation by begging a puppy from him to give to Zhao Jie. How nice. This didn't cost her money or energy. She was very satisfied with this gift.

Zhao Jie didn't say anything.

She looked up to ask, “Do you like it?”

Zhao Jie looked at the so small, it was pitiful looking hua tiao puppy. The young girl had been holding him up this entire time. He thought that her arms probably felt sore, so he cooperatively took the puppy from her. He placed the puppy on the side of a black wooden table that was decorated with golden dragons.

Then, he returned to looking at Wei Luo, “What about you?”

Wei Luo had stood up inside the box and was about to leave it, “What about me?”

Zhao Jie smiled, “You said that the things inside this box is this prince's gift, you're also inside. Isn't this giving yourself to this prince?”

To be honest, when he saw her inside the box, he felt delighted. He didn't like children, but she wasn't the same. She was an interesting child and it was very fun spending time with her. And, she wasn't as troublesome as other children that would easily cry

and fuss. Because she rarely cried, when she did cry, people would feel sorry for her and want to pamper her. They wouldn't be able to resist giving her anything she wanted.

Wei Luo was startled from his words, and then she shook her head like a rattle-drum toy, "I'm not a gift. I'm here to bring you a gift."

Her little face looked as if she was really afraid he would force her to stay here.

Although she was lazy about selecting a gift, she had spent a lot of effort and thought into delivering this gift. She wouldn't be able to hide this from Wei Kun and she had spent several days begging Wei Kun before he agreed. Otherwise, she would have been exposed the moment she went through Duke Ying's residence's outer gate. Also, this box couldn't be closed too tightly, or she and the puppy would have suffocated. And there had to be two holes added to the box for fresh air. During the journey here, the box rocked back and forth. She couldn't resist being lulled into sleeping, so she fell asleep on the way here.

Zhao Jie had only wanted to tease her a little bit. Seeing her expression, he couldn't resist smiling. He looked at the curled up puppy that was on the black table decorated with golden dragons.

"What's his name?"

Wei Luo hadn't thought of this question. Without carefully thinking, she randomly said, "Si Xi."

It was actually a very festive name. Zhao Jie nodded to show his acceptance of the gift. He wasn't a person that liked to play with dogs. During these days, the people in the capital were all interested in dog fighting. There had been numerous government officials who had tried giving him rare dog breeds to curry favor, but he had rejected all of them.

(T/N: The puppy's name is referring to the four happy events

that Chinese people hope their children will experience.)

It wasn't that he was worried that the excessive attention to trivial entertainment would make him lose focus on the important things, but merely that he had no interest.

The steward and Zhu Geng thought that he wouldn't accept the hua tiaogiven by Wei Luo. It was unexpected that not only did he accept, he also cared enough to ask for his name.

They knew that none of the three kittens given by Gao Danyang had names yet. And Zhao Jie didn't even bother bringing those kittens back to his residence. They were being casually raised in the palace. It was the same as not having them.

If they compared Zhao Jie's treatment of those kittens with this puppy's, it was the difference between heaven and earth. It really confused them.

Zhao Jie took out an indigo bag embroidered with clouds from a drawer. It seemed as if he prepared this in advance.

He placed it in her hand, "This is for you."

Wei Luo took it from him without understanding, "What is this?"

He kept giving her things recently. The previous time was the jade pendant, but this didn't seem like it was more jewelry. She couldn't guess what it was from feeling the outside of the bulging bag.

Just as she was prepared to open it, she heard Zhao Jie say, "It's New Year's money."

The sixth day of the new year could still be counted as within the New Year celebration period and Zhao Jie was older than Wei Luo, so if they were only considering those two factors, it wasn't unexpected for him to give her New Year's money. What made this unexpected to the steward and Zhu Geng was that Zhao Jie had never prepared this type of thing before. He never even gave New

Year's money to Princess Zhao Liuli, much less other children.

Wasn't his treatment of her too unusual?

Zhu Geng wanted to say something, but stopped and only looked at Zhao Jie. He stiffly returned the words that he wanted to say.

Wei Luo opened the bag and saw that the bag was full of pieces of gold in the shape of melon seeds and beans. No wonder the bag was so heavy. It was full of gold. Her eyes gleamed brightly and she raised her head to look at Zhao Jie. Her little face seemed to ask, is this all for me?

Zhao Jie smiled, "En, it's all for you."

She was a money-grubbing child. It was probably because she had suffered hardships in her previous life, so in this lifetime, she especially cherished hard to come by riches.

She sweetly said, "Thank you big brother." Then, she closed the bag and hanged it on her waist.

It was almost time. They should be heading towards the receiving room. Zhao Jie stood up and went to an inner room in the study to change clothes. His new outfit was a blue robe with a flower-like design and a green overcoat that had a flying fish pattern.

He held Wei Luo's hand as they walked to the receiving room. Snow had just started falling. The snowflakes were like floating cotton flowers that were blown off the glazed roof tiles by the wind.

There was a burst of cold wind. Zhao Jie leaned down to help Wei Luo tie up the ribbons on her bright red cloak and put on her hood.

He asked, "Are you cold?"

Wei Luo shook her head and pointed at her chest, "I'm wearing the jade pendant that big brother gave. Its very warm."

His face showed a smiling expression. He was obviously pleased

by her words.

As the two were preparing to continue walking, a young girl suddenly appeared in the verandah in front of them. She was directly heading towards them. This young and beautiful girl was wearing a charming, golden mink cloak and suede boots. Her bright and colorful clothing would attract everyone's gaze.

Wei Luo recognized her. She was Empress Chen's niece, Gao Danyang. The previous time they met in the palace, Zhao Jie was going to give her the kittens that Gao Danyang had given him and Gao Yang had clearly been very unhappy.

Gao Danyang had stopped a few steps from them. Originally, she had come here to look for Zhao Jie. Now that she had seen Wei Luo, her expression was complicated. From far away, she had just seen Zhao Jie leaning over to help her tie her cloak. When had Zhao Jie ever been this attentive towards another person? What kind of influence did this little girl have that would cause him to be so careful with her? Her heart had a sense of uncertainty and distrust, but this wasn't revealed on her face.

She said with a smile, "Older cousin Jing, your guests have been waiting for you for so long, why haven't you gone there yet?"

Because of her relationship with Empress Chen, Gao Danyang would occasionally visit Prince Jing's residence. The servants knew that her relationship with Zhao Jie was very good, so they never stopped her from going anywhere. At this time, she could freely enter and leave the inner part of the residence.

Zhao Jie couldn't help slightly frowning, "Something delayed me before. I'm going there now."

She paused as if the thought had just occurred to her, "Did older cousin Jing already know Wei Luo before we met last time in the palace? From what I see now, your relationship seems better than I had imagined. Didn't older cousin Jing return to the capital last year? How did you meet?"

Last time, after Empress Chen's birthday, Gao Danyang had secretly ordered people to investigate Wei Luo. Unfortunately, they were only able to find out about her family and status. As for how she met Zhao Jie, they were unable to find out.

She had to admit that she was jealous of a little girl. Although this girl was much younger than her and couldn't possibly be a threat to her, she still felt uneasy. Zhao Jie wasn't hot or cold towards her. But, he was thoughtful and attentive towards this little girl. He couldn't have some strange peculiarity, right?

When she thought about it, that didn't seem right. After all, Zhao Jie was cold towards other children; only Wei Luo was treated specially. What was different about Wei Luo? She looked at her left and right. Other than being more beautiful than other little girls, there wasn't anything particularly outstanding about her.

Zhao Jie didn't speak further on this topic.

Without a change in his expression, he changed the topic, "Did you come here with your mother?"

Gao Danyang flatten her lips. She knew that he intentionally didn't reply her question and couldn't help feeling disappointed.

But she wasn't the type of person who would continue pestering, so she tactfully said, "Father, mother, and younger sister are all at the receiving room. I saw that you were late, so I secretly came here to look for you."

The tension in Zhao Jie's face eased, "I was in the study."

Wei Luo listened to their conversation and thought it was time for her to leave. She gently pulled Zhao Jie's clothes to get his attention. He lowered his head to look at her.

Her two dimples were clear when she adorably said, "Big brother and big sister are talking. I'll go the receiving room first."

Zhao Jie didn't saying. She perceptively followed the steward and left the place first in order to not bother Gao Danyang and



him.

He watched them until they walked far away.

After thinking about it, he said to Gao Danyang, “In the future, without my permission, don’t casually come into this residence’s inner area.”

Gao Danyang’s face showed surprise and she asked in puzzlement, “Why? I had come here several times in the past and older cousin Jing never said anything. Why did this change now?”

He said, “You’ve grown up. If you continue, people will gossip.”

Why did it matter that she was grown up? Was she no longer his younger cousin because she grew up? Besides, everyone in the capital knew that they were childhood sweethearts, a match made in Heaven and arranged by Earth.

Even Empress Chen was interested in being their matchmaker. Why was he always lukewarm towards her? Never mind about their past. After all, they were still children then. But now they were at the age to be engaged, some things couldn’t be delayed.

Many sons of high officials had gone to Duke Zhen’s residence to ask for her hand in marriage, but Duke Zhen had rejected them all. She had wholeheartedly waited for him, but she still didn’t know his thoughts and feelings!

# Chapter 38

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After the New Year's celebrations were over, Wei Luo was seven years old.

Classes resumed on January 16th. Wei Luo accompanied Zhao Liuli in class every day. She would also occasionally have to go to Zhaoyang palace hall to see Empress Chen. Empress Chen seemed to really like her. It was probably because Zhao Liuli timely ate her meals and took her medicine due to Wei Luo's monitoring. As a result, Zhao Liuli's health was much better than last year's. Empress Chen praised Wei Luo by saying she was a little lucky star and that she was even more reluctant to let her leave.

Wei Luo didn't know what Zhao Liuli's situation was like in her previous life. If Zhao Liuli's health could continue improving, it would be wonderful. But, if Zhao Liuli couldn't escape her previous life's ending of dying from sickness, then no matter how hard Wei Luo tried, her efforts would be futile.

But after Wei Luo had spent so much time with her, she couldn't help having affection for her. Zhao Liuli was pure and willing to accept new ideas. If she liked someone, she would wholeheartedly treat that person well and be devoted to him or her. Even though Wei Luo was a girl who's heart was a little bit somber and gloomy, she was still emotionally moved by Zhao Liuli. If it were possible, Wei Luo would try to help her live a little longer and not let her die so young.

Today, when Wei Luo arrived at the First Study Room, she looked around and saw that there were three empty seats.

Li Song and Zhao Zhang hadn't attended classes for a long time. Tutor Chang didn't seem concerned about their absence and everyone else acted as if the two of them didn't exist. And now, there was an additional person missing. Zhao Liuli.

Wei Luo was extremely confused. Everything was fine yesterday

when she and Zhao Liuli were playing with snow. Why would Zhao Liuli be missing today?

She asked the tutor what happened, but he didn't know the reason. He probably wasn't informed yet.

Wei Luo waited until class was finished. Instead of going directly home, she walked to front of Qingxi palace. A mama wearing pink and blue clothing had just come out.

Wei Luo walked forward and asked, "Mama, why didn't Princess Tianji go to the First Study Room today?"

Wei Luo had been Zhao Liuli's study companion for over half a year, so all of Empress Chen's servants recognized Wei Luo.

The mama had come out to throw out the charcoal ash with teary eyes. Her words revealed the reason for her sorrow.

"Something happened to her highness yesterday... She's currently at Zhaoyang Palace. I'm not sure about her current situation. The Empress is watching over her."

Wei Luo was surprised. Wasn't she okay yesterday? How could an accident have occurred in such a short period of time?

Wei Luo asked the mama what happened. At first, the mama hemmed and hawed instead of answering. Palace rules forbid them from gossiping. But, since Wei Luo was only a child, she couldn't resist revealing to her a little bit of gossip. It seemed to be related to Princess Zhao Linlang.

Yesterday, Zhao Linlang and Li Xiang were playing in an inner garden. Zhao Liuli was passing by that area. It wasn't clear what happened between the three, but Zhao Liuli fell into the garden's pond. The surface of the pond was covered in a thin layer of ice. Zhao Liuli had floundered in the pond for a while before the mamas rescued her. She had been chilled to the point that her entire body was uncontrollably shaking.

She became very sick and had a high fever that night. Although

she had recently finally recovered her health, in a single night, her health was worse than before.

After Empress Chen received the news that this was related to Zhao Linlang and Li Xiang, she was extremely furious. She threatened to severely punish the two. But, because the matter wasn't clearly investigated yet and the other side had Noble Consort Ning pleading for leniency, their punishment was temporarily suspended. It was also more important to focus on Zhao Liuli's illness.

Since Zhao Liuli's body was originally weak and fragile, when she was ill, her illness was more severe than average person's. An illness or wound that would be minor on another person's body was life threatening on hers. At present, she was lying in bed and unable to awaken with an unchanging high fever. Her condition worried many people. Empress Chen stayed beside her day and night without sleep or rest. Her anguish was at its most extreme.

When Wei Luo heard about all of this, she wanted to go over to look at Zhao Liuli's condition. However, after she thought about it more thoroughly, she went home first instead. There would definitely be many imperial physicians in that room and she wouldn't be able to provide any help. She would only be an inconvenience if she went now. She would go visit Zhao Liuli once she recovered from her illness.

As she was sitting in the carriage going back home, Wei Luo kept thinking. Why did Zhao Liuli die so early in her previous life? When exactly did she die?

Wei Luo knew that she had died six years later when she was sixteen during a large snowfall. It should probably have happened in late December. If she were to frequently keep her company and pay attention to Zhao Liuli's health during that period, would she be able to extend her life?

Zhao Liuli had been seriously ill for the past several days, so Wei

Luo hadn't gone to the First Study Room. About half a month later, the palace sent news that Zhao Liuli was finally able to leave her bed and that Zhao Liuli missed her and was requesting that she enter the palace to visit her.

Wei Luo arrived at Empress Chen's palace's entrance. When she entered the inside of the palace, the burning hot temperature immediately scattered away any coldness on her body. She took off her black cashmere cloak that was decorated with satin plum blossoms as she walked forward.

"Liuli?"

Zhao Liuli's clear voice came from behind a bluish green cabinet "Ah Luo, I'm over here."

Wei Luo walked over there to look. Liuli was currently sitting behind an enameled table. She was engrossed with fiddling with a four-sided interlocking kongmingsuo (T/N: a type of interlocking puzzle). The kongmingsuo had been completely taken apart and was scattered across the table. She was currently trying her best to put it back together. Other than the kongmingsuo, there were also other types of interlocking puzzles on the square table... these were all toys for children. Why was she playing with these types of toys?

Wei Luo sat down across from her and carefully looked at her complexion. Her face was somewhat emaciated. Although her complexion was a little bit better after her recent period of recuperating, she was still clearly unhealthy.

"Are you feeling better? Why did you suddenly get sick?"

Zhao Liuli paused for a moment and then silently put down the kongmingsuo.

She raised her head to look at Wei Luo, "I'm much better now. I didn't get sick intentionally. Mother wouldn't let me go out the past few days and I didn't have a way to send a message to you. Don't be mad."

Wei Luo pursed her lips, "I'm not mad." After she thought about it, she still couldn't resist asking, "The mama said you had fallen into a pond. Why were you so careless?"

This matter was a bit embarrassing. Originally, Zhao Liuli had decided to not saying about it. But now, seeing that Wei Luo wasn't happy, she dejectedly told her the story from beginning to end.

That day was Zhao Linlang's birthday. To celebrate her birthday, Li Xiang and the other younger princes had gone outside to buy firecrackers and fireworks and secretly set them off in an inner garden. By chance, Zhao Liuli was passing by the garden. Zhao Linlang bumped into the sixth prince and the firecrackers in his hands landed by Zhao Liuli's feet. Zhao Liuli was startled. She repeatedly stepped backwards without paying attention to what was behind her and ended up falling into the pond!

Afterwards, everyone was punished with the sixth prince being punished the mostly harshly. It was said that he was grounded for three months to reflect about his misdeeds. He wouldn't even be allowed to go the First Study Room. His biological mother, Consort Liang, had also firmly beaten him.

After Wei Luo heard this, she didn't say anything for a long time. Zhao Linlang's bump into sixth prince. Was it intentional or not? It was definitely worth thinking over.

If it was intentional and she had such scheming inclinations at such a young age, Wei Luo would have to be careful of her.

Zhao Liuli didn't know Wei Luo's current thoughts.

She lowered her eyes and regretfully said, "Mother won't allow me to continue studying in the First Study Room. She doesn't want me to leave her palace. Ah Luo, you won't be able to be my study companion in the future."

Wei Luo could understand Empress Chen's way of thinking. Her daughter had met mishap after mishap in quick succession. Of

course, she would want to carefully protect her.

Liuli was almost ten. Would it be possible for her to overcome her previous lifetime's fate?

Wei Luo supported her cheek with a hand, "If I don't keep you company, will you still continue to obediently drink medicine?"

Zhao Liuli furrowed her eyebrows and hesitated for a moment before saying, "I will!"

During the past several days, she had seen that her mother had been physically and mentally exhausted because of her. So that her mother wouldn't worry, she would properly drink her medicine.

After she said this, she looked at Wei Luo with hopeful eyes, "Ah Luo, will you still come to the palace to visit me even if you're not my study companion anymore?"

Wei Luo nodded without hesitation, "Of course."

Liuli finally relaxed and smiled with perfect contentment. Wei Luo was her only friend. From the time that Empress Chen said she couldn't go to the First Study Room, she had remained worried until now. Would Ah Luo not play with her anymore? She couldn't stop thinking. Without any clues, the more she thought about this, the more she anxious she became as if she were on tenterhooks. Now that Ah Luo had said she would still come to see her, she could finally stop worrying and her smile had returned.

Since they had finished talking about the important things, Wei Luo pointed at the kongmingsuo that was on the table and asked, "Where did you get these type of things? How come I never saw you playing with these before?"

At the mention of these items, Zhao Liuli introduced them as if they were treasures, "Yang Zhen gave me these items. Mother won't allow me to leave her palace, so he bought these items as a way to pass time. They're very fun. It takes me a lot of time to figure out these puzzles."

Wei Luo tilted her head, “Who is Yang Zhen?”

She had never heard of this name. Ah Luo searched her memory, but she didn’t have the slightest impression.

Zhao Liuli face was delighted and proud as she secretively smiled, “Big brother gave me Yang Zhen as a bodyguard. Yang Zhen knows everything and is very skilled at martial arts. He’s very powerful.”

As she said this, she looked outside through a window and hurriedly pulled at Wei Luo to come over, “Look, that’s Yang Zhen.”

Wei Luo went over to look through the window. She only saw a twelve or thirteen year old boy leaning against one of the columns beneath the red veranda’s roof.

He was wearing silky, green clothing that had a round collar and was made of ramie fiber. He was tall and slender with grave and stern features. The corners of his lips were slightly raised. A single look showed that he an indifferent and reticent person.

His head was lowered as he carved a rectangular piece of wood. Hearing the sounds from the window, he coldly looked towards the window. His gaze fell on Zhao Liuli.

Zhao Liu smiled at him brilliantly, “Big brother Yan Zhen, don’t forget that I want a small rabbit!”

Instead of verbally replying, Yang Zhen briefly nodded and lowered his head to continue carving.

Normally, personal bodyguards weren’t allowed in the harem. But, Zhao Liuli’s situation was special. Since she was often sick and had frequents accidents, she needed someone to protect her. Otherwise, Empress Chen and Emperor Chong Zhen would worry. Since these two were in a rare agreement, then Yang Zhen being Zhao Liuli’s personal bodyguard and accompanying her everywhere wasn’t an issue.

Since he was highly skilled in martial arts, then nothing further



should happen to Liuli with him protecting her.

Wei Luo stopped looking at him. She couldn't help thinking. Since he was somewhat cold and didn't talk enough, would Liuli feel lonely with only having him at her side?

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Wei Luo returned to Duke Ying's residence. As she was stepping on the boxwood to get down from the carriage, she saw that Jin Lu was waiting for her at the entrance.

Jin Lu hurriedly walked forward and pressed the small shoulu (hand warmer) she had prepared a while ago into her hands, "Right now is the cold snap before spring and the temperature is becoming colder each day. Miss, you'll need to bring a hand warmer with you when you're going to the palace in the future, so that you won't freeze on the way."

Wei Luo listened to her, and then said in a clear voice, "Elder sister Jin Lu, I won't need to be Princess Tianji's study companion or go to the First Study Room anymore."

Jin Lu was surprised and asked her in puzzlement, "Why?"

She said what happened to Liuli without mentioning the beginning and ending of the story. She didn't mention the part about Liuli falling into water. She only said that Liuli's health wasn't good and that Empress Chen was worried, so she wouldn't allow Liuli to continue studying in the First Study Room.

After hearing this, Jin Lu sighed with sorrow, "Princess Tianji's health... what a pity."

Yes, she was born to such an enviable family background, but she didn't have the good health to enjoy it.

Wei Luo didn't say anything and just followed her going back.

Just as she was about to enter, from her peripheral vision, she saw a glimpse of a young girl that was wearing a pink and blue top

with a white skirt walking out from a corner. Wei Luo thought that she looked familiar. She couldn't resist stopping to look at her more carefully and then, she froze and stared blankly. This young girl that had delicate features and yellowing skin. Who could it be other than Ah Dai?

Wei Luo suddenly grabbed Jin Lu's hand, "Elder sister Jin Lu, who is she?"

Jin Lu followed her line of sight. She saw that the young girl was holding silk flowers and immediately knew who she was.

Jin Lu disapprovingly said, "She's probably someone who came here to sell silk flowers. Recently, people haven't been frequently coming to Duke Ying's residence to sell their handmade goods. Some of the crafts are exquisite and others are so badly made that they shouldn't even be shown to others. The people inside the residence probably rejected her silk flowers."

In her previous life, Ah Dai lived at the outer edges of the village and only left home to go into the forest to hunt for a living. Why was she selling silk flowers in this lifetime? In Longshou village, Lin Huilian was the only one that sold silk flowers!

Wei Luo was afraid she would miss this opportunity again and said to Jin Lu, "Elder sister Jin Lu, quickly call out to her to get her attention."

Worried that Jin Lu would be suspicious, she casually added, "Liuli mentioned today that she wanted to wear silk flowers. I want to see if that girl has any pretty silk flowers."

Hearing these words, Jin Lu let go of Wei Luo's hands and walked forward without any doubts. She made a sound to get Ah Dai's attention.

# Chapter 39

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Hearing voices behind her, the teenage girl turned around. She was indeed Ah Dai.

Although Ah Luo hadn't seen her in a long time, she recognized her in a single glance. Her memory of that night was exceptionally vivid. The torch's light had shone on the side of Ah Dai's face as she helped Ah Luo escape from the mountain forest. When Ah Luo turned her head that night, she could see a long scar on Ah Dai's face and her straight nose.

But now that Ah Dai no longer hunted wild animals in this lifetime, that scar was naturally missing, but the rest of her facial features were the same as the previous lifetime.

Jin Lu waved her hand at Ah Dai and called her to them, "My family's miss wants to see your silk flowers. What kind of flowers do you have? Do you have any special ones?"

Ah Dai had indeed gone to Duke Ying's residence's corner gate to sell the silk flowers she had made, but her skills weren't very good and no one was interested. She didn't expect to have another opportunity just as she was about to go another family's residence. She was surprised that a miss from Duke Ying's family would be interested in her silk flowers and felt overwhelmed. She hurriedly took out the silk flowers that she thought looked the best from her wicker basket and placed them in front of Wei Luo.

"Miss, what type of flower do you want? Here's tree peony, peony, lotus blossom, Chinese hibiscus..."

(T/N: Images of silk flowers from left to right , tree peony, peony, lotus blossom, and Chinese hibiscus.)

As Ah Dai said this, she didn't dare to look at Wei Luo's eyes. The difference between their statuses was like the difference between heaven and earth. One was a pampered, noble daughter from Duke

Ying's residence and the other was a lowly, orphaned girl from a rustic area.

Although the miss in front of her was only seven or eight years old, she looked as exquisite and lovable as snow white flowers. Ah Dai had never seen such a delicate and refined little girl. The children in Ah Dai's village couldn't be compared to her. She was wearing a white, silk top, a cherry blossom pink skirt that was embroidered with golden silk thread, and a shining silver longevity charm. She had a noble and composed aura just from simply standing there as if she were made by heaven.

Because her foster mother, Lin Huilian, wasn't feeling well and couldn't travel far from home, Ah Dai had come to the capital in her place. Ah Dai didn't think it was a big deal. After all, her foster parents had adopted her, so she should naturally help them with their work. Besides, it was nice to see the world and increase her knowledge and experiences.

Wei Luo looked at the silk flowers in Ah Dai's hands. She didn't know if that addicting perfume had been added to them. If she breathed in that added scent too much, would she become addicted?

She didn't dare to act rashly, so she asked, "Do you normally wear these silk flowers?"

Ah Dai was puzzled at first, but shortly after she smiled and said, "I occasionally wear them. The one in my hair right now was made by me." As she said this, she lowered her head to let Wei Luo see the deep red rose near the back of her head.

Wei Luo picked up a random silk flower to sniff. The silk flower didn't have any pungent smell. It seemed that the perfume hadn't been added to the silk flowers made by Ah Dai, so there shouldn't be anything addicting about the silk flowers.

Wei Luo silently reviewed these flowers. They really couldn't be considered good. The numerous flower petals weren't pretty and

the flowers weren't assembled beautifully. It wasn't a surprise that Ah Dai wasn't able to sell them. Wei Luo selected several flowers that she reluctantly accepted as decent and handed them over to Jin Lu.

Then, Wei Luo turned her head to ask Ah Dai, "What's your name?" In her previous life, she was called Ah Dai. Now that Lin Huilian had adopted Ah Dai, she probably had a new name.

As expected, she said, "Miss, I'm called Bai Lan."

(T/N: One translation of her name could be pure mountain mist.)

Lin Huilian and Bai Yang didn't know many words, but the name they gave her was pretty good.

Wei Luo nodded and said in a milky soft voice the serious details, "In the future, come to Duke Ying's residence every half month. I want twenty silk flowers every time. They all have to be made beautifully or I won't want them."

She looked at Ah Dai, "Will you be able to do this?"

To be able to regularly sell twenty flowers every half month, this was such a wonderful thing! Each silk flower was two coins. She would be guaranteed to earn 80 coins every month! With this income, her family would be well off enough to buy rice and noodles. Bai Lan was ecstatic.

She was almost about to cry in gratitude towards Wei Luo, "Thank you miss! Miss, don't worry. I will definitely bring you the most beautiful flowers!"

Wei Luo looked at her for a moment and revealed her white baby teeth as she smiled. She waited until Jin Lu paid Ah Dai, and then turned around to go inside Duke Ying's residence.

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After this, Bai Lan would come to Duke Ying's residence every half month with silk flowers regardless of weather conditions.

Since the servants in Duke Ying's residence knew that she was here because of fourth miss, they treated her politely. After she delivered the flowers, the servants paid her and brought the silk flowers to Wei Luo.

Wei Luo wasn't really grown up enough to wear silk flowers yet. She only bought the silk flowers from Bai Lan so that she could check in on her situation at any time to make sure that she wasn't in trouble.

Wei Luo distributed these silk flowers among the fifth branch's servant girls. Each girl was given two silk flowers. Each flower was made with a different style. The servant girls were very happy with this. They were thankful and appreciative towards Ah Luo and put more effort into serving her.

Wei Luo did indeed have a hidden motive with giving them the silk flowers. She was trying to obtain their hearts and loyalty. She was still young and only had Jin Lu and Nurse Ye-shi as her trusted servants. If she later need something to be secretly done, it would be best if she had a few more trusted servants.

Ah Luo couldn't trust Jin Ge actions and would always guard against her. And so, when Jin Ge was brushing Ah Luo's hair, Ah Luo deliberately said that Jin Ge pulled on her hair painfully and wanted to sell her. Jin Ge kneeled on the ground and begged for mercy without stopping, but Ah Luo wasn't moved by her actions and had already firmly made her decision.

Jin Ge had a natural disposition of being idle. She often slacked off in her work and was also very vain and liked to show off. The older mamas in the courtyard had long been displeased with her. Since fourth miss had already spoken, everyone was naturally happy to see this happening and no one tried to stop this.

In the end, Ye-shi informed the first madam and Jin Ge was sold off that very day.

Without these two eyesores, Jin Ge and Jin Ci, Ah Luo felt that

Pine Courtyard was much more pleasant.

Without noticing, Bai Lan had been bringing flowers to Duke Ying's residence for half a year. The servant girls were all very familiar with her. They would occasionally invite her inside to sit for a bit. But, she felt overwhelmed and would repeatedly refused their invitations. Later on, she heard that it was the fourth miss's request and nervously entered the residence.

She had always felt very grateful towards this fourth miss. In addition to the money she was paid for the silk flowers, she would also occasionally receive a few rewards for her services. Sometimes it was golden melon seeds. Other times it was a silver hairpin. Bai Lan used the money from selling these items for her family's expenses. As a result, her life had become relatively more extravagant. She fondly thought that Wei Luo already had such a kind heart at a young age. And, she would bring the beautiful silk flowers that she had sincerely made to Duke Ying's residence.

Today, the servant girls led Bai Lan to meet Wei Luo in the fourth branch's Plum Courtyard.

Wei Chang Mi was now seven or eight months old. This was the age when a child would start crawling everywhere. Qin-shi was worried that he would bump or knock over something and hurt himself. So, she ordered the servants to wrap the edges of the tables and the chairs in her house with cotton cloths.

Bai Lan arrived at the entrance to the Qin-shi's main room and saw that Wei Luo was holding an infant that was happily humming as he gnawed on her face.

Wei Luo's face was covered in saliva from his attempts at nibbling, but she didn't push away the infant.

Instead she blew her out her cheeks and said, " You're not allowed to bite me!"

Wei Luo glared at him. She could obviously easily push him

away, but she didn't.

Next to her, Qin-shi laughed as she said, "Mi-er likes you. If it were someone else, he wouldn't be so happily chewing. Ah Luo, be good and don't avoid him out of annoyance."

Wei Luo stood up from the ironwood couch and took the handkerchief that Jin Lu handed her to wipe her face, "Fourth aunt, you doesn't understand. Whenever I leave here to go back to my room, I always have to spend a long time bathing to be clean from his saliva and the smell of milk."

Hearing this, Qin-shi burst out laughing and nodded as she saw Wei Luo's furrowed eyebrows, then she said her sincere and earnest wishes, "Once Mi-er is grown up, you'll understand that his affection for you is a positive thing."

Wei Luo pursed her lips and didn't say anything. She didn't need to wait until Wei Chang Mi grew up to understand. The closer that Wei Chang Mi was with them, the more hopeless Du-shi and Wei Zheng felt. It wasn't that terrible to be hopeless. But, if you kept giving a person hope and then taking away that hope, then the despair she felt each time would be truly terrible.

Wasn't that the situation that Du-shi was currently experiencing? After she had cried and begged for a long time, Wei Kun allowed her to see Wei Chang Mi every two months. Wei Chang Mi wasn't close to her. Every time they met, he would behave as if she were a stranger. The moment she held him, he would cry to the point that Du-shi didn't know what to do. Her heart would feel as if a knife was twisting her heart.

However, no one felt any compassion for her. She was reaping what she had sowed.

The servant girls walked to the couch and reported, "Fourth madam and fourth miss, Bai Lan is here."

Hearing her words, Qin-shi and Wei Luo looked towards the



doorway. Bai Lan was nervously standing right outside the door.

She didn't know what to do with her hands, so she followed the servants girls' actions and also saluted, "Greetings fourth madam and fourth miss..."

Qin-shi was very friendly and waved for her to come closer. After she had carefully looked at her, "Were you the one who made the silks flowers for fifth branch?"

Bai Lan nodded and looked at the bottom of the couch. She didn't dare to look at her directly. "To answer madam, it was I."

Qin-shi praised her, "I saw them. The silk flowers were very pretty. Since Ah Luo has a preference for your silk flowers, you must have an exceptional point."

Qin-shi looked at the servant girls in the room, "My house has twelve servant girls. I want to buy two silk flowers for every girl. In the future, deliver these flowers along with the ones you sell Ah Luo. The price will be the same as fifth branch's and they must be made beautifully."

Bai Lan was unable to contain her joy and hurried to kneel and press her forehead to the ground, "Fourth madam, be assured..."

Hearing that Qin-shi was going to give them gifts, the servant girls in the room kneeled down to express their thanks. For a time, the room was filled with the sounds of "Thank you madam."

With this new income from Duke Ying's residence, Bai Lan didn't need to go the market to sell silk flowers anymore. Every half month, she would timely come to Duke Ying's residence and earn enough to support her family.

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Ever since Ah Luo stopped going to the palace to study, she had lessons with Teacher Xue and Han-shi.

Ah Luo liked to fiddle with the things in Han-shi's room and

would occasionally ask Han-shi for a few things to use in her own room. She loved beauty and knew that she was born good-looking, but she wasn't satisfied and wanted to look even better.

One time, she saw a porcelain bottle on Han-shi's dressing table and held it up to ask, "Aunty Han, what is this?"

Han-shi's face showed a bit of her uneasiness as she took the bottle from her and put it back on her dressing table, "You're still young. This thing isn't suitable for you. Aunty Han will give you something else."

Wei Luo was even more curious, "Why isn't it suitable?"

Han-shi coughed once and was determined to not tell her.

Later on, Ah Luo found out that it was used on a woman's private parts to... not only would it make that part more fragrant, it would also tighten that area. No wonder Han-shi looked so awkward at that time.

Fine, her body was still young, so it truly wasn't suitable to use this item. After she was a bit more grown up, she would definitely asked Han-shi for this item! What girl wouldn't want to smell fragrant?

---

The days had become colder once again. There was a heavy snowfall today. Ah Luo was sitting outside on Duke Ying's residence's red tiles looking at the charming and gentle scenery.

When she woke up the next day, the courtyard was covered in a layer of snow. There were a few servant girls sweeping the snow away outside. Wei Luo was wearing a fox fur cloak.

She held her hand stove as she asked, "Has Bai Lan not come here to deliver silk flowers this month yet?"

Jin Lu brought over a cup of rose water and nodded as she said, "It's already the seventh day of this month. Normally, she would

come on the first day. She's probably delayed because something is wrong at home."

Trouble at home... What could it be other than Lin Huilian's deceased son?

Could it be that Bai Lan was now fifteen years old and had been forced to marry Lin Huilian's son?

The more Wei Luo thought about this, the more she thought this was possible. She wanted to send someone to ask about the situation in Longsho village, but that village was too far away and she didn't have a good reason. Wei Luo could only impatiently wait another half a month. Bai Lan still didn't come.

The snow had just fallen today. Duke Ying's residence was a vast expanse of whiteness. The tree branches that were covered in sparkling, white frost looked like jade. She had heard from the courtyard's servants that Prince Jing had come to visit Duke Ying today. Currently, the two of them were in the front courtyard discussing something.

After Wei Luo heard this news, she repeatedly considered something before standing up to go the front courtyard.

She didn't have anyone else she could ask help from at the moment. Zhao Jie knew her nature and she wasn't afraid of him knowing more. As long as she hid the matter of her rebirth, she had a reasonable explanation for everything else.

She arrived outside the chess room. The chestnut wood doors were tightly closed. The people inside were probably still talking. She didn't enter and stood outside to silently wait. Jin Lu repeatedly asked her to go back out of worry that she would get cold, but Wei Luo firmly shook her head.

After the time it would take an incense to burn, there was finally movement inside the room.

Zhao Jie opened the door and saw a young girl standing near the

door. She was wearing cashmere clothing that had a decorative design of crimson Japanese roses. The young girl turned around to see that he had come outside and revealed a pleasantly surprised smile. She had been standing outside for too long. Her small face had paled to the point that it was almost transparent, only her nose was red.

She opened her soft lips to call out, "Big brother!"

Zhao Jie hadn't seen her in a long time. He had been very busy lately and didn't even have the free time to listen to Yang Hao's reports about her. She had grown a little taller and her facial features had become more beautiful. When he walked towards her, there was a faint sweet smell. She was only eight, but her beauty was almost too shocking.

Zhao Jie smiled and reached out to stroke her hair, "Were you waiting for me?"

Ah Luo raised her head and grabbed the hand that had been placed on her head. On his wrist, there was a trace of an uneven bite mark. By now, it had become faint, but it was still possible to feel the mark.

Her eyes showed her quick-wittedness and her smile showed her two dimples, "Big brother, could you go with me to somewhere?"

# Chapter 40

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Soon after, Duke Ying came out. He shook his head when he heard her words and disapprovingly said, “Ah Luo, don’t say such nonsense.”

He and Zhao Jie had been discussing matters about the imperial court. Because the contents were top-secret, the two of them wrote out their discussion, so that they wouldn’t have to worry about someone eavesdropping on their conversation. Afterwards, they burned their writing papers using an oil lamp.

During the past two years, the Emperor had become increasingly harsher towards the Chen clan. If Empress Chen wasn’t in between them and the Emperor, perhaps the Emperor might have already eliminated them.

Zhao Jie had visited him because of this matter.

Duke Ying had always been upright and honest. He never participated in any political disputes. But, after their discussion, he thought highly of Prince Jing and started to waver. He was only a seventeen-year-old youth, but his mind was meticulous and his actions were decisive. He didn’t hide his thriving ambitions from Duke Ying. During the past two years after he had return to the capital, he had prepared well in established his own sphere of power and influence while concealing his own strength and biding his time.

If he were to support Prince Jing, it wouldn’t be a bad thing. Based on Prince Jing’s abilities, he would definitely become great in the future. At that time, Duke Ying’s family would also rise in power and status with him.

Wei Zhang Chun kept internally assessing whether or not he should stay neutral, so he didn’t pay attention to Wei Luo and Zhao Jie’s conversation.

Zhao Jie resisted smiling and patiently asked her, “Where do you want to go?”

Wei Luo glanced at Duke Ying, and then looked at him. She gestured at him to lower his head, and then gestured at him to lower it more. After he did that, she stood on her toes and quietly said into his ear, “Somewhere outside the capital.”

Zhao Jie was surprised by her words and couldn’t help looking at her directly. He had originally thought she would say a place in the capital. He didn’t expect that she would want to leave the capital. He didn’t agree, but he didn’t refuse either.

He turned towards Wei Zhang Chun, “Duke Ying, thank you for your hospitality today. This Prince will take his leave now. I’ll come back to visit another day.”

Wei Zhang Chun’s response was in accordance to customs, “Your highness is too courteous.” As he said, he prepared to send Zhao Jie off.

But Zhao Jie gracefully declined, “This Prince will leave by himself. It’s very cold outside and Duke Ying is advance in his years. It would be better if you stay here.”

He accepted the black satin cloak embroidered with cranes that Zhu Geng handed to him and draped it over his shoulders. Intentionally or not, he looked at the little girl before leaving the verandah.

Wei Luo couldn’t help feeling anxious. Did he agree or not? Taking advantage of when Wei Zhang Chun wasn’t paying attention, she ran off after Zhao Jie. She very naturally grabbed his hand and stopped in front of him.

She raised her head and impatiently asked, “Okay?”

Zhao Jie stopped walking. Snow had fallen off the top of the pine trees and a snowflake had landed on Wei Luo’s eyelashes. He used his other hand to gently wipe away the snowflake. “Why do you

want to leave the capital?”

Wei Luo had already thought of a good reason in advance, so she answered naturally, “I have to go save someone.”

Zhao Jie couldn't resist smiling, “Who are you saving?”

She held onto his hand a little bit tighter, “If big brother brings me out of the capital, I'll tell you.”

Zhao Jie stared back at her. When he smiled, his eyes were gentle and soft. When he wasn't smiling, it was difficult to tell what he was thinking from looking at his eyes. He looked at her for a while. His thin lips curved as he thought her question over, then he asked, “When do you want to go?”

Wei Luo counted the days. She couldn't continue to wait. Based on what Ah Dai had said when she asked, Ah Dai would turn fifteen in the next few days. If she continued to wait, Ah Dai might be buried alive by that couple. “Tomorrow.”

By coincidence Zhao Jie was free tomorrow and would be able to help her. He didn't know why, but he wanted to tease her a little bit, so he intentionally said, “It can't be the day after tomorrow?”

Wei Luo repeatedly shook her head and begged with her limpid eyes, “Can't it be tomorrow? Are you busy tomorrow?”

The smile in Zhao Jie's eyes deepened. He paused, “It's not that tomorrow isn't good...”

“Let's agree to that then!” Wei Luo made the final decision. She took out a melon seed from her pocket and stuffed into his hand to express her thanks, “Thank you big brother. Big brother, you're the best.”

After she said this, without waiting for his reaction, she brightly smiled at him, and then ran off to her room. Her small figure that was wrapped in a red cloak was especially noticeable in the world of snow and ice. Her steps were light and graceful. In a short time, she had disappeared from his sight.

The little girl's actions were abrupt and had caught him off guard. Zhao Jie's hand held the fragrant melon seed that she had given him. After he looked at it for a long time, he laughed involuntarily.

---

The next day, Prince Jing's carriage stopped outside in front of Duke Ying's residence.

Wei Luo finished washing her face, rinsing her mouth, and putting on her clothes. Then, she told Wei Kun that Zhao Jie was taking her out of the capital. Wei Kun was originally doubtful, but after Prince Jing's personal servant talked with him, he consented to let her go and repeatedly warned her to come home early and to not to go overboard with playing.

Before she left for her journey, at the front gate, Chang Hong disappointedly asked her, "Ah Luo, why I can't come with you?"

Wei Luo smiled as she patted his head, "What do you want? I'll bring it back for you."

Chang Hong didn't want anything. He just wanted to go with her. In the end, he shook his head, "Be careful."

Ah Luo nodded once, then she turned around after smiling.

She wasn't going outside to play. She had to accomplish an important thing. If it wasn't because of her past life's experience, she could watch Ah Dai's misfortune with folded arms instead of interfering. After all, there were too many tragedies in this world and she didn't have to the free time to fix all of them.

But, she had suffered through this before and could sympathize. Also, Ah Dai had helped her in her previous life, so she couldn't brush this aside. After she settled this, she would no longer be connected to Longshou village or that couple. She didn't care if that couple lived or died.

After she sat down in the carriage, Wei Luo said to Zhao Jie, "I



want to go to Longshou village.”

There was a basin of charcoal burning in the carriage. Although it was freezing outside, it was nice and warm inside the carriage. Zhao Jie was holding a book titled “Canon of Supreme Mystery” that he had been reading. His eyelids were slightly hooded and his tall posture was dignified. After he heard her words, he asked the driver outside, “Zhu Geng, did you hear her? Go to Longshou village.”

(T/N: “Canon of Supreme Mystery” was a divinatory text written by a Confucian writer, Yang Xiong.)

Zhu Geng’s voice came from outside, “To respond to his highness, I heard.”

The carriage slowly started to move and started its journey. Zhao Jie didn’t ask what type of place Longshou village was or why she wanted to go. He went along with whatever she said. His indulgence towards her was to the point of excessiveness.

The inside of the carriage was the same as last time. On the small, lacquered table, there were pastries and dried nuts. At the first careful glance, walnuts and melons seeds had taken up most of the space. There were also some exquisite and cute snacks that had been made in the palace and were greatly liked by girls.

Wei Luo’s heart was filled with concerns. She didn’t have any interest towards the snacks, instead she kept looking through the window. She didn’t relax until the carriage slowly left the capital’s gate.

Their travel went smoothly without any obstructions on the flat official road and the carriage’s speed increased after leaving the capital. In a moment, she saw pure white snow on both sides of the road. The snow was sparkling and clear. However, watching the snow for a long time would tire the eyes and Wei Luo stopped looking. She lowered her head to rub her eyes. Her mood became increasingly serious.

When she opened her eyes, Zhao Jie had already put down his book and was looking at her curiously.

Ah Luo put down her hands and said, "Big brother, when will we get there?"

Zhao Jie considered and said, "We should get there before nighttime."

Too slow! It wasn't even noon yet. She calculated the time. It would still take another six hours of sitting. Ah Luo impatiently asked, "Could we get there a little faster?"

He wasn't in a hurry. He thought she had wanted to come out here to relieve her boredom. "Why are you in a rush? What are you planning on doing there?"

She was only a seven or eight year old girl who rarely left her home. She shouldn't know such a distant place. Zhao Jie wanted to know what she was she was planning. But, this little girl guarded her mouth like a closed bottle. Even if he asked, she would only tightly seal her lips and wouldn't reveal her thoughts.

Zhao Jie smiled, "If you don't tell me, then we'll get there even later."

Wei Luo froze, then she looked at him. Her small form was somewhat vexed. Even though she was pushed to this point, she still didn't say anything.

As a result, he was even more curious.

The sun gradually rose up. The carriage didn't take any breaks as it continued to move forward.

Wei Luo ate a few pastries to fill her stomach. By the time it was noon, she had fallen asleep on a blanket. When she woke up again, it was dusk. The afterglow of the sunset spilled over the poplar trees that were on the side of the road and the trees wore a layer of rosy, red clouds. The snow reflected the glowing orange red light.

She promptly sat up as she somewhat sleepily said, "Are we there?"

Zhao Jie was still reading. He seemed as if he had been in this posture the entire time, "There's still one more hour."

Wei Luo could only sit back and restrain her emotions.

---

Longshou village was between two mountains and surrounded by woods. Its narrow paths and remote distance made it an inconvenient and difficult to find place.

After an hour, Zhu Geng finally stopped the carriage at the entrance of the village and said, "Prince, we're here."

Wei Luo impatiently lifted up the carriage's golden embroidered curtain, then she stepped down the carriage using the steps. She turned around in a circle to look at this place. It truly was her familiar Longshou village. At the entrance to the village, there was a large stone. On the right side, there was an irrigation canal. On the left side, there was empty land. She looked inside the village. The land was vast and the houses were in the same places as she remembered.

She had lived here for ten years and her memory of this place was deeply entrenched. Even if she wanted to forget, she wouldn't be able to.

She walked forward without needing anyone to guide her. She clearly remembered where Lin Huilian's house was located. The sun was setting and there weren't many people walking around. Every household was coming back from the fields to prepare and eat dinner. Smoke rose up in spirals from the cooking fires.

She picked a small path and meandered forward. She turned back to look and saw that Zhao Jie was leisurely following her. She let out a relieved sigh, and continued walking. In a short time, she stopped in front of a shabby house.

In her previous life, she had resided in this home with Lin Huilian couple. The walls were made of compressed dirt, the path was muddy, the door was wooden, and the courtyard was so small it was pitiful. But, it had once been her only home.

By this time, it was dusk. The moon had slowly risen up and was suspended in a remote place.

Wei Luo looked inside. The central room was pitched-black and there wasn't smoke coming from the kitchen. No sound was coming from inside.

Her heart had a faint feeling of bad premonition. She gently pushed the front door, but the door was locked and she couldn't push it open.

Her heart thumped. She had confirmed that no one was home, but right now was dinnertime. If they weren't home, where did they go?

Wei Luo thought of the worst possibility. Her pink lips were tightly clenched and her eyes were gloomy in the darkness. Her small face was stretched taut. A thousand things were hidden in her heart that she had never said to anyone else.

Zhao Jie was silently watching her from a few steps away. He didn't step forward to disturb her or ask her any questions.

She finally unfroze and raised her head. Then, she walked towards the neighbor's house. The next-door neighbor had just come outside to pour out water.

Wei Luo walked to her and hesitantly asked with a soft, milky voice, "Madam... Do you know where this family went?"

This woman's last name was Wang. She had been a neighbor with Lin Huilian for several years. Ah Luo was familiar with her and knew that she was an honest woman, so she decided to ask her.

After the woman had finished pouring out water, she held the

wooden bowl as she dazedly looked at Wei Luo. Longshou village was a remote and desolate place. It was rare for outsiders to pass-through. It was even less likely that someone from the capital would come here to look for someone. Wan-shi had never seen a little girl dressed like her. In the twilight, she looked like someone who had stepped out a painting. Her body had a noble aura and was completely incompatible with the villagers.

“Madam?” Wei Luo called out again.

Wang-shi returned to her senses. She thought about what Wei Luo had just said and the expression on her face changed slightly. She looked at her left and right as she said, “Little girl, why are you looking for them? They’re not home.”

Wei Luo stubbornly continued to ask, “Where did they go?”

Wang-shi thought about what Lin Huilian and Bai Yang were doing, and then looked at how Wei Luo was dressed. She guessed that Wei Luo was someone from the capital and was afraid of being involved in this. She retreated into her home, closed the door, and said, “Their daughter is getting married today and they went with her!”

Wei Luo’s face paled. She stared at the closed door in front of her without moving.

Hearing that woman’s words, she thought of her past life. On the day she had turned fifteen, she had worn a red wedding dress. It was the first time she had worn makeup and put up her hair. She had been dressed up beautifully. Lin Huilian and Bai Yang had helped her walk outside their home.

From a distance, the familiar villagers watched them with complicated expressions. There was sympathy and pity in their eyes... but no one stepped forward to stop them. The boys that had previously asked for her hand in marriage were being held back by their parents and could only look at her sorrowfully. They couldn’t do anything for her.

Then, she was brought to halfway up the mountain. Lin Huilian and Bai Yang dug out their son's coffin and forced her to kneel and pressed her head down towards the coffin.

The villagers clearly knew that she wasn't getting married. She was going to be killed. But, why was Ah Dai the only person that helped her?

The more she thought about it, the more scared Wei Luo became. Her heart trembled from icy fear. She didn't feel any warmth from her hand warmer.

Wei Luo thought of the plight that Ah Dai was facing. She quickly flung down the little cloisonné enamel hand warmer and ran off in the direction of the mountain.

She moved too quickly. Zhao Jie called out, "Ah Luo!"

She couldn't hear him. The warmth in her eyes had been blown away by the cold wind, only the coldness remained.

## Chapter 41.1

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At this time, the sky was already dark. The mountain was far away and the path there was rugged. And it was likely that they might meet danger. In a blink of an eye, there was already a great distance between him and Wei Luo. Zhao Jie could only gesture to Zhu Geng to catch up to her.

In a few jumps, Zhu Geng caught up to Wei Luo and was firmly blocking her path.

Wei Luo was currently extremely anxious and had no time to explain. She pushed him and said, "Let me pass."

For every moment that she was delayed, the more likely that Ah Dai would be in danger. Who knew how long they ago they had left their house? Have they already started the ceremony? If she was too late, Ah Dai might already be buried alive!

But, Zhu Geng was an unmovable as a mountain. She couldn't push past him no matter how hard she tried. If she moved in a different direction, he would follow her direction to intentionally stop her. Ah Luo raised her head to fiercely glare at him. Just as she had grabbed his hand and was about to bite down, Zhao Jie caught up to them.

His slender fingers blocked her small mouth and his beautiful voice calmly asked, "Ah Luo, where do you want to go?"

Wei Luo had brought them here for a reason that only she knew, so she knew that she had to provide them with a reasonable explanation. Otherwise, this wouldn't be justifiable no matter what. However, it was still too early. It was more important to save Ah Dai first. She hesitatingly looked at Zhao Jie like a small beast that wanted to escape its shackles. After a long time, she said, "Up the mountain."

Zhao Jie looked her in the eyes and slowly nodded, and then he

held her hand, "Okay, this prince will bring you there."

A sense of uncertainty existed in his heart. He had asked what she was planning, but she didn't reveal anything. It was only now that he knew why she asked him to come with her. It was because she wouldn't have been able to get here by herself. Then the question was, how did she know this place and why was she so familiar with it?

She was Duke Ying's fourth miss. Normally, she lived a secluded life. Other than her home and the palace, she rarely went anywhere else. She shouldn't have previously come to such a place.

Zhao Jie looked at the little girl in front of him. Her dark eyes were gloomy and cold. While holding his hand, she was trembling slightly as if she was trying to conceal her emotions. She was always hiding things in her heart instead of telling other people. She was clearly only seven or eight years old, but her thoughts were deeper than anyone else's. When she had been standing outside that house's doorway, her little shoulders had dropped. She looked so pitiful and frail. He almost couldn't resist stepping forward to hug her.

What was she hiding?

Zhao Jie recovered his senses and went back to looking forward.

It was nightfall and the mountain forest was quiet. Zhu Geng was holding up an oil lamp while he walked behind them. The faint light illuminated the path beneath their feet and stretched into the deepest part of the mountain forest. There was a thick layer of snow beneath their feet and their feet would sink into the snow as they took each step. It was a very difficult walk, but Wei Luo didn't express any complaint. She tightly held his hand and didn't say a word as they progressed further into the woods. The trees blocked the moonlight and he couldn't see the expression on her face.

Wei Luo had been walking forward using her memories as a guide, but she overestimated herself. That day had been too



chaotic and she had been too fully occupied to remember the path. When she was going up the mountain, her red wedding veil had covered her head. When she was descending the mountain, she had been fleeing wildly. So, at this moment, after walking this far, she didn't know which direction to go and was spinning around in place.

She looked left and right, but the scenery was the same blackness in each direction and she couldn't tell where she was.

Zhao Jie asked here, "Are you lost?"

With a somewhat hopeless look in her eyes, she replied in discouragement, "En."

Zhao Jie smiled and unknowingly calmed down. It was good that she didn't recognize which path to take. This was normal. If she even knew which mountain path to take, then he really had to be suspicious of her.

Zhao Jie leaned over her to brush off the sparkling and translucent snow on her head. Then, he gathered together her cloak and put on her hood. The white rabbit fur crowded around her little face. Underneath the lamplight, her face had become deathly pale. He asked, "Where do you want to go?"

She deeply pondered before replying, "There's a grave."

Zhao Jie's eyes didn't change and he didn't ask further before ordering Zhu Geng.

Zhu Geng immediately jumped onto a tree to look at the surrounding area. There was an easy way to find cemeteries. Blue will-o'-the-wisps would rise from graveyards at night. In the darkness of nighttime, this was especially distinct. Zhu Geng was highly skilled in martial arts and his eyes were the same. In a short time, he jumped down from the tree. He pointed in the southwest direction and said, "Prince, there's something strange there."

Zhao Jie nodded and held Wei Luo's hand again, "Let's go."

Wei Luo followed his footsteps. After walking such a long mountain path, she had become tired a long time ago, but she took a deep breath and continued walking forward without complaining. Now that she knew which way to go, she walked even faster. Without noticing, she let go Zhao Jie's hand and had left him behind. But, she was still too young. After only walking a few more steps, her body was unable to endure. Her speed became slower and slower.

She had just taken another step when her foot struck a stone that had been hidden by the deep snow. Her body couldn't help falling forward and she could only watch, as she was about to fall onto the ground!

From behind her, Zhao Jie grabbed her waist. When she was stably standing again, he didn't let go. Instead, he held her in his arms and picked her up from the ground. He couldn't help but laugh as he said, "You're finally tired?"

Wei Luo didn't struggle. Instead she took the opportunity to cling to his neck and buried her ice-cold face in that shelter. She slowly said, "En."

Her small face was icy cold, but her breath was warm. Zhao Jie didn't continue to tease her. He carried her as he continued walked.

Zhu Geng followed behind them. He was unable to bear seeing his respectable prince carrying a young girl while walking a mountain path. He spoke up to suggest, "Prince, how about letting this subordinating carry fourth miss on his back?"

Zhao Jie didn't pause. His voice was serene, "Walk in front of us and carry the lamp to show the way."

Zhu Geng was inviting a rebuff and making himself unwelcome. He rubbed his nose and could only follow Zhao Jie's order. Carrying the lamp, he walked in front of them.

Wei Luo thought Zhao Jie's neck was very warm and kept burrowing herself in her search for warmth. The breath from her small mouth was warm. At some point, her nose had reached his ear. She was like a proud kitten that liked to wrap herself around other people. Zhao Jie freed one of his hands to touch her forehead, "Cold?"

She shook her head. She didn't forget why she was here, "Not cold. Walk faster big brother."

Zhao Jie didn't say anything else. He continued walking forward on the mountain forest path.

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There was indeed a cemetery in the southwest. Because it was currently deep winter, there weren't many burning will-o-the-wisps. There were only a few, bright flames that were gently burning. This was the same scene that Zhu Geng had seen at the top of the tree. The light from the fire had a celebratory redness that had an eerie effect.

Zhao Jie had finally walked here while carrying Wei Luo. He looked at the scene in front of him.

Wei Luo's face was suddenly unable to move. Her eyes had frozen on a couple that wasn't far away from them. That couple was Lin Huilian and Bai Yang. At this time, they were holding shovels and shoveling dirt into a grave. The coffin had already been deeply buried. In front of the grave, there was a bright red candle. On the side, there was a pair of embroidered red shoes!

They had come too late. Ah Dai had already been buried alive!

## Chapter 41.2

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The couple finished shoveling the last layer of soil and put away their things. They stopped in front of the grave to say a few words, and then holding the bamboo basket, they were about to descend the mountain.

Wei Luo trembled with endless anger, "Capture them, big brother... capture them..."

At this time, Zhao Jie and Zhu Geng finally understood what was happening. Their faces had become imposing. After Wei Luo finished her words, Zhu Geng was like a shot arrow. He quickly arrived in front of Lin Huilian and Bai Yang and took out the sword at his waist and pressed it against his necks, "Stop!"

The couple was dressed normally. They looked simple and honest, but their hearts were vicious. The two of them didn't think a person would appear at this time. Frightened, their conscience became guiltier.

Lin Huilian stubbornly maintained her arrogance and said, "Who are you? Why are you blocking our path?"

Zhu Geng directly asked, "What were you burying?"

Bai Yang was a thin and weak man and he couldn't walk nimbly. Covered in cold sweat, he said, "We weren't burying anything. Today is the anniversary of my child's death. I'm here with my wife to burn paper in offering... how is this related to you?"

After saying this, he turned around to leave using another path. Unexpectedly, another person carrying a young child came from that direction. His presence wasn't ordinary and he seemed like a person that shouldn't be provoked. The two of them guessed that their business had been revealed, but they couldn't guess the identity of these people. They gritted their teeth and prepared to run away.

They had only run a few steps away when Zhu Geng caught up to them.

Zhu Geng unloaded them from his arms and dropped the two of them in front of Zhao Jie. He cupped his hands in obeisance, "Prince, how should they be dealt with."

The two of them lied on the ground and wailed incessantly.

Zhao Jie's eyes were cold. He asked the young girl in his arms, "Ah Luo, how do you want to deal with them?"

Wei Luo was worried about Ah Dai. She hadn't been buried for a long time and might still be alive. She looked at the people on the ground. Seeing them again, her mood didn't go up or down the slightest amount. She said, "First, make them dig that person out."

Lin Huilian and Bai Yang's faces changed and they shook their heads, "No... You can't..."

Zhu Geng placed his sword on Bai Yang's neck. With the smallest amount of pressure, Bai Yang's neck started bleeding. Bai Yang paled in fear and he quickly changed his words, "Okay okay, we'll dig."

They didn't know which deity they had provoked. Their plan had originally been going well. They couldn't have expected that these three people would suddenly appear. They were clearly not people from their village. Since they weren't, why would they intentionally come here? It couldn't possibly be because they knew Bai Lan? They thought of this, but they hastily rejected this idea. These three people were clearly not common people. How could they have any relationship with Bai Lan?! But other than this reason, what other reason could there be?

Lin Huilian and Bai Yang couldn't figure it out. Forced by Zhu Geng's sword, they once again dug out the coffin that they had just buried.

He looked at Wei Luo's grave face and hurried them, "Hurry up.

If you're too slow, I'll have your lives."

The two of them were resentful, but they could only obey. After the time it would take an incense to burn, a black coffin was revealed at the bottom of the grave.

Wei Luo tightly clenched her fists. Her soft voice solemnly said, "Open it."

Bai Yang and Lin Huilian wanted to make a final effort. It wouldn't be good if the coffin opened. Their son wouldn't be peaceful in the underworld without a marriage. They said with hesitation, "Our son is inside. It's been too long. Only a heap of bones is left... Why do you want to look at this? There's nothing else inside."

This didn't move Wei Luo. Her voice became more resolute, "Open it!"

They could only obey. They slowly opened the coffin to reveal what was inside. A bundle of white bones appeared in their line of sight. Zhao Jie was behind Wei Luo and he covered her eyes. When the top of the coffin was completely removed, there was also a teenage girl wearing a bright red wedding dress inside. Because she had been sealed inside for too long, her face was deathly pale. Her eyes were closed. She had lost consciousness a long time ago.

Wei Luo slowly pulled Zhao Jie's hand away and looked inside. Her gaze stopped at Ah Dai's body. After a long time, she asked, "Is she still alive?"

Zhao Jie looked up to see inside. Although the girl's face was very pale, after the coffin was open, her chest had been moving up and down. She was probably still okay. He finally knew why Ah Luo wanted to come here. Even knowing why, he was still curious what relationship Ah Luo had with that teenage girl, "She's okay."

Wei Luo let go of her worries and turned her head to look at that couple.

Lin Huilian and Baiyang were under Zhu Geng's watch. They were both kneeling on the ground. They knew that they couldn't keep their secret and started talking about their bitter predicament. After all, if this were told to the authorities, they would be punished. They knew their actions were wrong, but they still went through with it.

Could a dead person's marriage be more important than a person's life?

Zhu Geng had taken Ah Dai out from the coffin. Ah Dai remained unconscious at Ah Luo's feet.

The redness of the wedding dress was horrifying. The firelight shined brightly in the Ah Dai's golden hairpin. Because her family was poor, the hairpin was only gilded with a thin layer of gold. The golden polish was tapering. Without any warning, Wei Luo took off the hairpin on Ah Dai's head and took a step towards Liu Huilian!

Lin Huilian had stiffly put her hands on the ground. She saw a little girl looking at her coldly and holding up the sharp-end of a golden hairpin. Before she could understand what was happening, the little girl had viciously struck the hairpin down at her hand!

She let out a painful shout. Fresh blood splashed out on the ground.

Ah Luo hated that hand. It was that hand that had saved her and brought her home. It was that hand that raised her to adulthood, cooked her food, and washed her clothes. And, it was also this hand that pushed her into a coffin and completely smashed her feelings of warm-heartedness and gratefulness.

And now, she was using this hand to harm someone else. Why was she so wicked? Ah Luo's eyes were cold as she pulled the hairpin out from Lin Huilian's hand. Then, she resolutely pierced her right hand. One stab wasn't enough. She need to stab a second and third time. She wanted her to feel pain. The more pain that

Lin Huilian felt the better. She wanted to make it so that this pair of hands would never hurt anyone else by making silk flowers, or picking up a shovel.

Lin Huilian was in so much pain that her entire body was twitching and sweating. She wanted to push Ah Luo away, but Zhu Geng was behind her. Her body was powerless and she couldn't make a single movement.

Not much time passed before Lin Huilian fainted. Wei Luo held the hairpin and slowly stopped.

She bowed her head and stayed motionless.

Zhao Jie stepped forward to hold her. As he was about to wipe away the blood on her face, he saw that she was crying and suddenly stopped his action. Tears were stored in her eyes. Drop by drop, her tears fell. She cried silently as if she had suffered a big grievance. She looked far too fragile.

Zhao Jie crouched down in front of her and asked in surprise, "Ah Luo?"

She stretched out her arms, hugged his neck, threw herself onto his chest, and began to loudly cry. Her sobs changed into howling and wailing. Her warm tears slid down his neck. It seemed as if her heart-broken and sad tears were endless.

Zhao Jie held her in his arms and surrounded her little body. At this moment, his heart ached for her.



## Chapter 42.1

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Wei Luo cried for a long time. Her tears had dampened a large spot on Zhao Jie's clothes. He didn't know how such a small child could cry so many tears. Her sobs turned into wails. Eventually, her wails turned back into sobs. In the end, she rubbed her tears on his chest. Zhao Jie was worried that she would cry so much that she would end up fainting.

The winter night was too cold. It wouldn't be okay if she continued crying like this. Zhao Jie could only use his sleeve to wipe away her tears. As he did this, he tried coaxing her, "Ah Luo, be good. Don't cry anymore."

She moved her head to avoid his sleeve. Her long eyelashes fluttered. She quietly mumbled in her milky voice, "It hurts..."

Zhao Jie stopped his action. It took him a few seconds for him to understand that the fabric on his sleeve was too coarse and had hurt her face. Without a better option, he used his fingers to wipe away her tears. His mouth didn't say anything, but his mind couldn't help thinking that such a delicate little girl didn't voice a single complaint when they had been walking on the mountain path for a few thousand meters (a few miles).

After Wei Luo was done crying, the resentment and frustration that had been accumulating in her heart vanished like smoke in thin air. She would no longer have any connection with this couple or Longshou village. The thing that had hurt her most in her previous life had finally ended. She turned her head to look at the fallen Lin Huilian and the stiff Bai Yang, "Big brother, I loathe them."

Zhao Jie stood up. His palm was placed on her shoulder as if he were putting her under his protection, "How do you want to deal with them?"

Hearing these words, Bai Yang's body shook uncontrollably. He

looked at the two of them and had a bad premonition.

Sure enough, Wei Luo's following words were, "Since they're so worried about their son, they should be buried with him to keep him company in the underworld."

Her sweet voice said such ruthless words without any fluctuation as if she were discussing an extremely common matter. Her idea was thorough. If they did this, then they wouldn't have to worry that another person wasn't doing a good job with taking care of their son. After all, they should be more assured if they did this themselves than if someone else did it.

Zhao Jie didn't have any objections, "Okay, it'll be done as you said."

Bai Yang's eyes widen in panic. He shook his head, "No, no... Sir, please spare us..."

On the side, Lin Huilian was listening to them. She tolerated her acute pain as she kowtowed for mercy. Her bloodied hands were placed on the ground, "We were just temporarily confused..."

How could this be temporary confusion? They had prepared for this moment for several years. If they were going to come to their senses, then why wait until now? They were merciless and unscrupulous, so they couldn't blame other people for being ruthless towards them.

Wei Luo didn't have the slightest intent to change her mind. Her head was huddled into Zhao Jie's shoulder to completely ignoring them.

If they were to simply bury them alive, this would be letting them off too easily. After Zhu Geng blocked Bai Yang's pressure points that were for moving his limbs, he tied him up with rope and directly flung him into the coffin. Bai Yang was in so much pain that his face turned white.

Lin Huilian also had her hands and feet tied before being flung

down with him. The coffin wasn't big. It was a tight squeeze to accommodate two people and the skeleton. The two of them couldn't avoid the painful sensation of pressing down on their son's bones. In this desolate area outside of their village, this was quite horrifying.

Bai Yang was soaked through with sweat. Without regard to anything, he shouted, "Help!"

After that word, the coffin was closed with a "bang" and blocked off his voice from the rest of the world and severed the rest of his hope.

Lin Huilian and Bai Yang's hearts withered away into dust and fell into despair.

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In the end, Zhu Geng didn't actually bury them alive. He only left them in the coffin for one night as a punishment. On the next morning, Longchun's villagers discovered that they were missing. A few people came up the mountain to look for them and found the coffin that had been left outside the grave. The villagers remembered what the couple had planned to do last night and couldn't resist opening the coffin to look inside. Who could have guessed that Lin Huilian and Bai Yang would be lying inside?!

Lin Huilian had lost consciousness due to excessive blood loss and Bai Yang couldn't move his hands and feet due to Zhu Geng's actions. In the end, they were carried home.

That afternoon, their crimes were brought to the attention of local authorities. The local authorities sent bailiffs to get them. As they were being taken to the law court, Lin Huilian and Bai Yang said they were wrongly accused. But, when they arrived, they immediately stopped speaking. Not only was Bai Lan there, the three people from last night that had taught them a lesson were also there. One of those three people was a luxuriously dressed noble that was sitting next to the district magistrate. The district

magistrate was extremely deferential towards him and even personally delivered tea and water to him.

At this moment, the two of them realized that they had provoked extremely powerful people.

This legal case almost didn't need to go through a trial for the judge to sentence a judgment. With Prince Jing as a witness and the words of Bai Lan, the victim, the district magistrate slapped down the wooden gavel. They were each sentenced to be beaten with a stick thirty times, then detained in prison until they were sent off to complete three years of forced labor!

In addition, because the common people of Longshou village didn't report this matter, every household would be fined ten pecks (2.5 bushels) of grain. In this way, the matter was considered to be satisfactorily concluded.

Afterwards, with a smiling face, the district magistrate personally escorted Zhao Jie to the carriage that would take him back to the capital. He didn't dare to do anything that would slight him. Additionally, he prepared a separate carriage for Bai Lan that would follow Zhao Jie's carriage back to the capital.

Wei Luo had already asked Bai Lan if she would be willing to go with them to the capital as her servant.

Since Bai Lan had learned that Wei Luo had come here just to save her, she was grateful enough to shed tears. She responded at once that she would wholeheartedly follow her. As long as there was a place that she could settle down, she was perfect willing to be a servant. Besides, Bai Lan was currently homeless. She absolutely couldn't return to Longshou village. That place would no longer tolerate her. So, the best choice was to go to Duke Ying's residence to be a servant. At least, she wouldn't have to go hungry or sleep outdoors.

Bai Lan sat in the back carriage and thought of all the good things that Wei Luo had done this year. She secretly promised in her

heart that she would be steadfast in serving the fourth miss. She had to pay back the fourth miss's kindness in saving her life.

## Chapter 42.2

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On the road back to the capital, inside the prince's carriage, Wei Luo pretended she couldn't see Zhao Jie. She kept her head lowered and set herself against a pile of toasted pine nuts. From the time she entered the carriage, she had been eating pine nuts with a faint rustling sound as if she were a little squirrel. As she ate and ate, a pair of slender hands took away the jade plate that had been in front of her.

She didn't have a choice. She could only raise her head to look across.

Zhao Jie placed the plate at his side. His dark eyes calmly looked at her. His thin lips were slightly pursed. Although he clearly didn't say a single word, it seemed as if he had already said everything.

His current reaction was normal. She had tricked him into coming here without explaining anything. Everything that had occurred was strange. If it had been anyone else, he wouldn't have went gone along with this. But, for her, he was willing to obey her wishes without asking any questions until the matter was resolved.

On the way here, Wei Luo had felt grateful towards him and wasn't as guarded against him as before. Her voice was as sweet as glutinous rice when she called out, "Big brother, I want to eat pine nuts."

This didn't move Zhao Jie, but there was a smile in his eyes, "Tell big brother everything and you can continue eating."

Wei Luo blinked innocently and cutely, "What do you mean?"

He thought-provokingly said, "What do you think?"

After he said this, he remembered that he was facing a little girl that wasn't grown-up enough to understand. His usual oppressive methods couldn't be used, so he changed to say, "Why were you

familiar with that place?”

Wei Luo had thought of the answer to this question a long time ago. Now that he was asking her, she offered a realistic answer, “I’ve been there before.”

Zhao Jie raised his eyebrows.

She continued, “Once, daddy took me outside with him. On the way back, there was a heavy rainstorm and we couldn’t continue traveling. We just happened to pass by someone’s home and stayed over for a night.”

She said that person was Bai Lan. Bai Lan had also made and given her a silk flower. She still remembered that night. “Later on, elder sister Bai Lan came to the capital to sell silk flowers. I recognized her, so I had her delivering silk flowers to Duke Ying’s residence every half month.”

Zhao Jie thought of Yang Hang’s reports. He had indeed mentioned a girl that would go to Duke Ying’s residence every half month and seemed familiar with Ah Luo.

Ah Luo held her cheeks and sighed sadly, “Elder sister Bai Lan told me one time that she wouldn’t be able to come again. I asked her why... At first, she didn’t want to say anything. She only told me after I pleaded with her.” The little girl flattened her lips and made a look as if she were about to cry, “Later on, she really ended up not coming back. I was worried that something had happened to her, so I asked for your help to bring me there.”

Having said this, she raised her head to look at him with teary eyes. Her eyes were clear. She didn’t seem like she was lying.

Zhao Jie looked at her without speaking. He raised his hand and slowly rubbed the red birthmark on her eyebrow. This little girl’s explanation was fair and reasonable. But, he didn’t know why. He just couldn’t accept this as completely true. She was tricky and cunning. Her thoughts were complicated. Did she really want to

come here for such a simple reason?

Then why did she cry as if she were broken-hearted and wronged last night? Why did she feel such resentment and bitterness towards that woman? It was shown the moment that she viciously struck down with that hairpin. This couldn't be explained in a few words.

Wei Luo saw that he didn't have any reaction. She called out once to get his attention and pointed at the jade plate next to him to ask, "Can I eat now?"

Zhao Jie bent his lips and soon, he slowly said, "You can eat."

Perhaps he was overthinking. Or, perhaps she really was hiding something from him. If it were the latter, it was okay. If she didn't want to say, he wasn't in a hurry to force her to tell the truth. Inevitably, he would know everything eventually.

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The carriage slowly traveled through the capital and eventually stopped at the entrance to Duke Ying's residence.

Wei Luo hadn't returned last night. Wei Kun was worried to death and had ordered people to search the capital. From beginning to end, they didn't find her. If Prince Jing's servant hadn't come early in the morning to tell him that Ah Luo was with Zhao Jie and that she wasn't in danger, he might have already gone insane from worry.

After Wei Kun learned that the two of them had gone to save someone last night, he was shocked. He waited until Zhao Jie left, then he hurriedly asked Wei what had happened. Wei Luo repeated what she had told Zhao Jie. But, she took out the part about Wei Kun and her passing through Longshou village.

When she was three years old, Wei Kun had indeed taken her out on a trip that was far away, but they didn't pass through Longshou village and there wasn't a heavy rainfall. Their return to the



capital had been smooth and unimpeded. Nothing had happened.

After he finished listening to her, he carried her onto his lap. With lingering fear, he said, “Ah Luo, in the future, no matter who is in trouble, you can’t go to such a dangerous place.”

Wei Luo muddled-headedly nodded to show that she heard him.

She wouldn’t go there. She would never go back to that place again. In this life, she was Duke Ying’s family’s fourth miss that lived a life of luxury like a princess. She didn’t have anything to do with that little girl who had combed her hair into unadorned plaited braids and wore simple clothing with scattered flower blossoms design.

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After Zhao Jie returned to his residence, he ordered Zhu Geng to investigate. Five years ago, Wei Kun had indeed gone to Yangzhou and had taken Wei Luo and Chang Hong with him. On the way back to the capital, they would have passed by the road to Longshou village. But, as for whether or not they had stayed in that village overnight, it was too long ago. It wasn’t possible to verify.

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At Duke Ying’s residence.

After this event, Wei Luo accepted Ah Dai as a personal servant girl. She thought that Ah Dai as a name was too casual and simple, so she let her continue using Bai Lan as her name. She ended up keeping this name for many years.

Wei Luo silently grew up in Duke Ying’s residence without notice. The place that she went to the most often was Han-shi’s Orchid Courtyard. She would use Han-shi’s body products to wash her face, rinse her mouth, and take baths. She became more and more tender and lovely. In the blink of an eye, many years had passed. The little girl that used to be as beautiful as carved white

jade had now grown into teenage budding beauty with an incomparable appearance.

# Chapter 43.1

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Two days before the Spring Lantern Festival.

The temperature had warmed up again. The snow in the courtyard had gradually started to melt and disappear. The flower buds in front of the door were noticeably vivid. Spring was approaching.

Jin Lu was standing in front of painted rosewood divider screen as she called out once, “Miss, are you done?”

After a while, a sweet and lovable voice came out from behind the divider screen, “Wait, I’m not finished yet.”

Wei Luo didn’t like people waiting by her side when she was bathing. She would always send Jin Lu and Bai Lan outside and slowly take a bath by herself. At this moment, she was standing in front of the bath barrel and feeling troubled.

She looked at the pink dudou embroidered with golden tree peony flowers that she was holding in her left hand. She had tried putting it on several times.

(T/N: Dudou is an undergarment that covers the chest and stomach.)

She knew how put it on, but wearing it felt painful.

At the beginning of the year, she had just turned thirteen. This was period that young girls started growing and developing. The two small peaches on her chest felt sorer each day.

As they swelled, she would hiss even if they was gently touched by clothing, especially the tips of the two small red beans. When they ached, everything they touched felt rough and harsh. After she put on the dudou, the chaffing from the cloth felt painful and weird. If she didn’t have to go the fourth branch’s courtyard to meet fourth aunt soon, she really didn’t want to want to put on the dudou.

Jin Lu called out again from outside. Wei Luo frowned in annoyance. Her only choice was to tolerate the discomfort and put on the dudou for now. Then, she called Jin Lu inside to help her put on the rest of her clothes.

Jin Lu's head was lowered as she walked out from behind the divider screen. She didn't dare look at Wei Luo's body too much. She was afraid that if she did, it would become a habit. Her eyes and nose focused on picking up the clothing. Despite her efforts, as she served Wei Luo with putting on her clothing, she inevitably touched that delicate and flawless skin. Her exquisitely made skin was pure and smooth. It seduced people to enjoy themselves and linger.

Wei Luo changed into a pink jacket filled with wild goose feathers. Beneath it, there was moon white cascading skirt. On the outside, she had a cloak that was embroidered with cherry blossomed colored tree peony flowers. Originally, she didn't like to bathe during the day. But, she had a dream last night. When she woke up, she was soaked in sweat. She felt uncomfortable and took advantage of the early morning to take a bath.

Bai Lan was carrying a food box in the front and leading the way. She had following Wei Luo for four or five years and was now entirely in her element inside the residence. She was no longer that overcautious and nervous girl that had just arrived at Duke Ying's residence.

Just as they arrived at fourth branch's Plum Courtyard's entrance, a small figure came rushing over from behind the door, wrapped his arms around Wei Luo's waist and happily called out, "Fourth elder sister!"

Wei Luo tried to pull off this little fellow. Although the other person was young, his strength was sufficient to hug her tightly and she couldn't pull him off. "Wei Chang Mi, how did you know I was coming?"

Because she knew what Wei Chang Mi would look like when he grew up, Ah Luo really couldn't accept the affection he had towards her. She would always involuntarily substitute his current face with the one that he had as an adult. When she thought of that wild and unrestraint person, she would abruptly have a bad feeling and tremble when Wei Chang Mi hugged her.

Wei Chang Mi looked up. A little face that would be considered handsome in any era was seen. With an overflowing smile on his face, he said, "Fourth elder sister's body is very fragrant. As soon you come here, I can smell it."

Wei Luo poked his forehead a few times. At such a young age, he already knew how to say sweet words to coax a girl into happiness. No wonder, he became an excessively promiscuous romantic when he grew up.

Although her body was sweet smelling, it definitely wasn't as exaggerated as he described. When she was bathing before, she had used two drops of rose dew made by Han-shi in hopes that after her bath, she would give off a faint fragrance. Only a person that was very close to her body would be able to smell it. He must have heard the sound of her footsteps and known that she had come.

"Chang Mi, you're saying nonsense to your fourth elder sister again." Qin-shi had a small enamel hand warmer concealed in her hand. She was wearing a light yellow robe with a dark four-season pattern of begonia flowers and grapes. She smiled while sitting on an ironwood arhat couch.

Chang Mi finally let go of Wei Luo and returned to ironwood couch to sit. Holding up his cheek as he said, "I didn't say nonsense. I only said that because I like fourth elder sister."

Wei Luo glanced at him and didn't say anything. She took the box of food from Bai Lan's hands and placed it on the small, red lacquered, inlaid with gold, and decorated with spirals table. "Yesterday, Chang Hong went outside to help me buy pastries from

Yuhe. I thought that since fourth madam also likes to eat their pastries, I had him buy a portion for you too.”

As she said this, she opened the box. There were four small exquisite pastries inside. There was a cake roll made with soy beans and filled with red bean paste, yam pastry with jujube paste, osmanthus flower pastry, and icy dragon fruit cake. These four pastry types from Yuhe’s were well known. Although the pastries’ ingredients were common, their taste was exceptional.

Qin-shi picked up a piece of icy dragon fruit cake. When it entered her mouth, it was ice cold. When this was eaten during winter, it would usually cause the entire body to quiver. But when she placed it in her mouth to eat, it quickly melted. The milky and fruity taste filled her mouth and made her want to eat more of it.

As she fed Chang Mi a piece, she regretfully sighed, “Chang Hong is so thoughtful towards you. You two have such an admirable, close sibling relationship. But...” When she had said half of her sentence, she looked at Chang Mi and her eyes showed a complicated emotion.

Wei Luo knew what she wanted to say. Her relationship with Chang Hong was good. In contrast, Wei Zheng and Wei Chang Mi’s relationship with each other was truly awful.

As soon as Wei Chang Mi saw Wei Zheng, he would subconsciously reject her. He wasn’t warm or emotional toward her. As soon as Wei Zheng saw him, she would become angry and not have a pleasant attitude. This older sister and younger brother’s relationship continued to worsen by the day. By now, it was at the point where they both mutually disregard the other.

However, Wei Luo didn’t think there was anything wrong with this. Wei Chang Mi was raised in the fourth branch’s household. At the beginning of the year, he was formally adopted to be fourth madam’s son. It was normal that he wouldn’t be close to Wei Zheng. After all, he usually didn’t have much contact with Wei

Zheng. Every day, he was with fourth madam and third elder brother, Wei Chang Xian. It went without saying which people he would be close to and which people he would be distant with.

Du-shi had rushed over to the ancestral hall from Ginkgo Courtyard the day that Wei Chang Mi was formally adopted by Qin-shi. As Du-shi hugged him, she was so sad that she wanted to die. She persisted in her denial. Wei Chang Mi trembled in her arms. As he struggled, he called out “mother” to Qin-shi. This “mother” was a fatal blow towards Dui-shi. It was because every time that Du-shi saw him, he had never called her mother. He would only follow Wei Luo in calling her madam.

Later, Wei Kun had people take her back to her courtyard. She had lost her mind. Her gaze was empty when she looked at Wei Chang Mi as if someone had cut off a piece of her flesh while she was still alive. Her chest felt as if it were dripping blood from that wound. There was only despair and hopelessness left.

If you thought about it, this was normal. Other than that Qin-shi didn't give birth to Chang Mi, she had done everything that a mother should do. She had loved him dearly and taken care of him in every possible way.

And Du-shi? Every time she saw Chang Mi, she would only cry and complain. She would cry and say malicious words about Qin-shi and Wei Luo. In the end, she would scare Chang Mi to the point that he would wail with her.

The fact that Wei Chang Mi called Qin-shi his mother, but not her wasn't the slightest bit outrageous.

At the moment, after Wei Chang Mi heard Qin-shi's words, he pouted unhappily. He threw down the piece of icy dragon fruit cake and rushed to say, “My relationship with fourth elder sister is also good. It's just as good as elder brother Chang Hong's.”

Qin-shi smiled. She stroked his hair and asked, “There are so many elder sisters in the residence. Why do you only like fourth

elder sister?”

Wei Chang Mi’s replied, “Because fourth elder sister looks the best.”

Qin-shi burst out in laughter. She had no other alternative than tapping his forehead, “You...”

He was so young and he already differentiated between beauty and ugly. It really made her worry what he would be like when he grew up.



## Chapter 43.2

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After Wei Luo left fourth branch's courtyard, she coincidentally met Wei Ya and Wei Zheng on the way back to her room.

Since the time that third madam Liu-shi's had harmed her, Wei Chang wasn't cold or warm towards Liu-shi. In addition, Liu-shi's family had gone through troubled times. Several years ago, Liu Zhang Qing was removed from his position as a Salt Department official. Liu family had fallen in the world and their days were difficult.

Li-shi had been depressed this entire period. Her parents' family had declined and Wei Ya had reached a marriageable age. She started to worry about the problem of Wei Ya's dowry. Every time she thought about this, she couldn't help thinking about the chests of dowry jewelry that she had given to Wei Luo. Her heart couldn't ache any worse. She had told these things to Wei Ya. So that when Wei Ya saw Wei Luo now, her expression would become very uncomfortable.

At a distance, these two girls were both slender and graceful. Wei Ya was wearing a golden honey jacket, an embroidered white skirt, and a wood-colored satin cloak that had golden flowers everywhere. Her outfit was slightly monotonous.

In contrast, next to her, Wei Zheng was dressed more glamorously. She was wearing a red satin jacket with a golden treasure pattern and a green skirt that was embroidered with golden thread. The red and green colors didn't look vulgar when worn on her body. Instead, these two colors highlighted her beauty.

She was more beautiful and clever than Wei Ya and her eyes were also sharp. Without a trace of politeness, she looked at Wei Luo who was across from them. She didn't call out "fourth elder sister" or greet her. Instead, she pulled Wei Ya and turned around to

leave.

Wei Luo watched them leave. Contempt flashed in her eyes for a moment, then she continued walking.

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When she had returned to Pine Courtyard, Wei Kun and Chang Hong were currently in the main room discussing the Spring Lantern Festival. During this time of the year, the capital would be livelier than during New Year. There were lanterns hanging at the entrances of all the houses.

Inside the capital, in Qujiang district, there were tens of thousands lanterns floating in the river. It looked as if the beautiful and bright Milky Way had been placed on the ground. Wei Kun thought that since the children had been restricted for a year, he intended to let them go outside to be lively and enjoy the excitement on the streets. This was why he was discussing the arrangements with Chang Hong for that night.

Wei Luo walked inside the main room. In a glance, she saw the teenage boy sitting on the ironwood chair. He was wearing a lilac colored robe with a persimmon pattern. His figure was slender and his face was handsome and bright.

His head was slightly bowed as he listened to Wei Kun. His thick eyelashes casted a shadow on his cheeks and hid the expression in his eyes. Hearing a sound, he raised his head. Seeing that it was her, a brilliant glow emerged in his eyes as his eyes became soft and warm, “Ah Luo.”

Wei Luo walked forward and sat down in the chair next to his, “What was daddy saying earlier?”

Wei Kun picked up the cover his teacup, drank a sip of maofeng tea (T/N: a type of green tea), and slowly said, “The day after tomorrow is the Spring Lantern Festival. I’m busy that day, so I told Chang Hong about my plan to have Song Hui take the two of

you outside to walk around.”

Wei Luo was slightly surprised, but soon after she smiled, “Isn’t elder brother Song Hui busy with studying for his exam? Does he have free time?”

Last year, Song Hui had taken the Provincial Imperial Exam. During the next two years, he would be preparing to take the Imperial Civil Service Exam. For most of this year, he had been spending his time at home studying. Wei Luo hadn’t seen him in a long time.

Wei Kun nodded and said, “I had asked him in advance. He said he was free that day.”

Wei Kun had a selfish motive for doing this. His daughter was growing up. Her engagement with Song Hui should be settled soon. It would be the best if the marriage could be set before Song Hui took the exam. He knew that with Song Hui’s abilities, Song Hui would definitely be able to place within the top three in the Imperial Civil Service Exam. Emperor Chong Zhen valued people with talent. If Song Hui could distinguish himself in the Imperial Civil Service Exam, then his future career potential would be limitless.

Wei Luo dragged out a single, “Oh.” Then she said, “I’ll listen to daddy.”

On the side, Chang Hong pursed his lips in displeasure, but he didn’t say anything. He hadn’t like seeing Song Hui from the beginning. After all these years, his feeling still hadn’t changed. It wasn’t known what Song Hui had done to offend him to the point of disliking him this much.

Just as Wei Luo finished her words, they saw Wei Zheng standing at the doorway. There was subtle change on her face as she said, “Daddy, I want to go too.”

## Chapter 44.1

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Wei Kun didn't have an objection to this. He only warned her to be careful with her actions and to not be impulsive on that day before allowing her to leave the residence with Wei Luo.

Wei Zheng thoughtfully glanced at Ah Luo and nodded. She said with a laugh, "Don't worry daddy. I'll listen to elder brother Song Hui's words."

Then, Wei Kun said some minor and not very important details. Seeing that the three of them were seriously listening, he felt reassured, so he stood up and left.

As soon as Wei Kun left, Wei Zheng also followed his action and left.

Wei Luo sat in her chair and attentively watched the direction that Wei Zheng departed.

Wei Luo's dark eyes moved and her lips held a fake smile. The nearby people just thought that she was in a good mood, but they didn't know what she was thinking in her heart. As Wei Zheng was leaving, she had deliberately glanced at Wei Luo with clear provocation.

How could Wei Luo not see? The reason that Wei Zheng wanted to go with them wasn't because of the Spring Lantern Festival, but because of Song Hui.

She didn't know if Wei Zheng liked Song Hui. But, she knew that Wei Zheng wanted to have Song Hui. There wasn't any other reason than that Song Hui was her fiancé. She didn't know when Wei Zheng started to like to snatch away her things. But, as long as it was something that she liked, Wei Zheng would think of a way to get that item. Of course, there were very few times that Wei Zheng succeeded. This time wouldn't be an exception. Wei Zheng's intention was too obvious. If she couldn't see, then she was a fool.

Wei Zheng wanted to snatch away her fiancé to see her what she looked like when she suffered.

Unfortunately, she didn't have any romantic feelings towards Song Hui. Even if Wei Zheng snatched him away, she wouldn't feel sad or hurt. It was only that she would feel somewhat unhappy if she saw that something that belonged her being stolen away.

Wei Luo couldn't help feeling somewhat curious. In her previous life, when Wei Zheng married Song Hui, did she have the same type of mentality? At that time, she was no longer a threat to Wei Zheng, so why did she still remember her? Was the reason because Wei Zheng liked Song Hui?

If that was true, Wei Luo thought this would be more interesting.

If Wei Zheng liked Song Hui, how could she let her have him easily? To give him to her for nothing, wouldn't that be letting her off too easily?

Wei Luo curved her eyes and showed a bright and lovely smile. Her heart had a sinister idea, but her face was shockingly pure and innocent.

By her side, Chang Hong called out with a somewhat unhappy tone, "What are you thinking about? I tried to get your attention several times, but you didn't respond."

Wei Luo turned her head and said smilingly, "What did you say?"

Chang Hong didn't answer her question and stubbornly said, "Tell me what you were just thinking about first."

She held her cheek on the palm of her hand and intentionally made a show of being mysteriously, "Not telling you."

After she said this, Chang Hong didn't say anything for a long time. He looked as if he had suffered a setback. After a while, he mustered up his courage to ask, "Were you thinking about Song Hui?"

She turned her head in surprise, blinked, and didn't say anything.

Chang Hong thought he had guessed right. His handsome face immediately changed and he couldn't resist speaking his mind, "Actually, I can take you outside without Song Hui accompanying us."

Right before she had entered the room, he had been discussing this matter with Wei Kun. He was grown up now. He wasn't that six-year-old child anymore. It wouldn't be a problem from him to bring Wei Luo outside to walk around. But, Wei Kun insisted that Song Hui go with them.

Ah Luo was currently in the prime of her youth. Chang Hong didn't know why his father didn't worry about other people gossiping. What was he thinking?

Wei Luo couldn't resist laughing. When she laughed, it was the same sweet and beautiful sound that she had as a child. Her laughter would make a person feel entirely free of worry when hearing it. "Chang Hong, did older brother Song Hui secretly bully you when we were children?"

Chang Hong shook his head, "He didn't."

She became more curious, "Then why don't you like seeing him?"

Chang Hong didn't say anything. In his mind, he thought that it was probably because Song Hui will marry Ah Luo in the future. He thought that Song Hui wasn't good enough for Ah Luo. Ah Luo was so wonderful. Even if there were ten Song Hui, he would still think that it wasn't good enough.

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The next day, the weather was nice with a soft wind that made people feel warm and comfortable and a cloudless sky.

Because they were leaving towards the evening, Wei Luo was

worried that it would get colder during the night, so she wore a cloak with a creamy white marten fur trim. Then, she followed Chang Hong to the entrance. House Zhongyi's black and flat roof carriage was waiting at the entrance. There was a young man standing in front of the carriage and talking with Wei Zheng.

Wei Zheng had arrived here very early. A single glance showed that she had carefully dressed up. Her hair was arranged with two loops on the top and the rest of her hair was down. She was wearing a hairpin made of golden wire that was inlaid with rubies and had bluish-green coloring at the two raised edges.

Below, she was wearing an autumn color top with wide sleeves, a skirt that was embroidered with numerous butterflies, and a red silk outer layer with a stylized flower pattern. She was naturally pretty. Dressed up like this, she was even brighter and more eye-catching.

Wei Luo didn't know what the two of them had talked about. But when Wei Zheng's lips were curved up in a smile and the sharpness in her eyes were diluted, she seemed more obedient and lovable.

Song Hui had a warm smile on his lips. When he looked at Wei Zheng, it was the same look that he had towards his younger sister, Song Rui Wei. When he talked to her, it was also the same absent-mindedness.

But when he looked up and saw that Wei Luo and Chang Hong had arrived at the entrance, the smile in his eyes deepened. He gave off the feeling of a warm and comfortable spring breeze and his gaze also became more focused.

When Wei Luo walked closer to them, he said, "Younger sister Ah Luo is here."

The originally handsome and elegant teenage boy had grown into a handsome, tall, and slender man. He was wearing an elegant loose gown with a wide belt. When he spoke, the sound of his voice was as pleasant as the sound of flowing water as it murmured. He

was the same as that time when they had sat in the carriage many years ago. Back then, he had gently rubbed her face and helplessly smiled as he said, “Truly a delicate girl.”

Wei Luo nodded, “Older brother Song Hui, have you been waiting here for a long time? I didn’t know you had already come, so I dawdled before coming here. You won’t be angry, right?”

Song Hui smiled as he shook his head. How could he be angry with her? He had never been able to be angry with her. Seeing that it was now dusk, he thought that the streets must already be quite lively. He said to them, “Let’s set out early.”

And so Wei Luo and Wei Zheng went inside the carriage and Song Hui and Chang Hong rode horses to follow the carriage. The four of them headed toward the liveliest area in the capital.

The Spring Lantern Festival’s carnival was held in the western part of the capital. The sight of the countless colored lanterns would dazzle the eyes. Every color and style of lanterns under the sun could be seen. The carnival also had many activities: guessing riddles written below the lanterns, watching puppet shows and people walking on stilts, and releasing the colored lanterns into the night sky. The streets were crowded with people and were very lively.



## Chapter 44.2

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By the time they arrived, the streets were packed with a jostling throng of people.

Originally, Wei Luo was worried that it would get too cold at night, so she had worn an extra layer of clothing. At the moment, it seemed that she had worried for nothing. With such a lively atmosphere, she wouldn't be cold here. She took off her marten cloak inside the carriage and revealed a moon white and sky blue sleeved silk top underneath, a honey colored skirt, and a silk sash was tied around her slender waist. It caused even Wei Zheng to looking at her twice.

After they came out of the carriage, Wei Zheng suggested, "How about going to look at the lanterns with the riddles first? It'll be very interesting."

Song Hui nodded. It could be counted as approval. He looked at Wei Luo, "Where does Ah Luo want to go?"

Wei Luo curved her eyes in a smile, "I'll listen to older brother Song Hui."

Song Hui's eyes softened. Underneath the light of a thousand colorful lanterns, the warmth in his eyes seemed overflowing. "Then, let's go look at the lanterns with riddles first. After we're done there, we'll go look at the puppet shows and the lanterns being let go."

Wei Luo said okay and walked with him in the front.

Chang Hong and Wei Zheng followed behind them. Chang Hong's line of sight was fixed on the back of Song Hui's head. He fell just short of drilling a hole into Song Hui's head. In the end, Chang Hong only pursed his lips. When he turned his head, he saw stalls selling fried pastries balls and went to buy a bag of them. He brought the bag to Wei Luo, "Ah Luo, try some of this."

Wei Luo accepted the bag and used a bamboo stick to bring a piece to her mouth. The small snack ball was fried to a crisp golden yellow, covered with a layer of sugar, and filled with red bean paste. The red bean filling was sweet and very hot. This was the first time she saw an eating method like this. Her eyebrows pinched and she complained, "Too hot."

When Chang Hong heard her words, his expression became guilty. He had given her the snack as soon as he bought them without trying it first. He didn't know what the snack would be like. Hearing her say it was too hot, he quickly put his hand next to her mouth, "Spit it out. Don't eat it anymore."

It would be too impolite to spit something out on the street. Although Wei Luo thought it was too hot, she still forced herself to swallow it. She clutched her mouth and had tears in her eyes, "My tongue feels burned."

After she said this, Chang Hong felt even worse. He didn't even pay attention to rest of the snacks in the bag. He wanted to look at Wei Luo's tongue, but Wei Luo wouldn't let him. The two of them nosily quarreled over this and ended up ignoring Song Hui who was at their side.

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They would pass-through a stone bridge to get to the area with the lanterns that had riddles written underneath.

Standing at the top of the bridge and surveying the scene below, they could see that the entire street had dazzling lanterns that stretched from one end to there other. It was as bright as the Milky Way. It was if the stars in the sky had spilled out onto the ground. When the lights were shined into their eyes, it took their breath away.

There were red, pink, yellow, and white lanterns, and there were also rabbit, lotus, octagon-shaped, and other various lanterns. There were also fish and dragon lanterns from the myth of the

dragon gate where a carp could transform into a dragon. There were so many lanterns that the sight stunned their eyes.

There were various kinds of riddles written underneath the lanterns. When people figured out the answer, they would step forward to tell their answer. If they were right, they would get a prize. There were many people surrounding each lantern. Everyone was in high spirits and was guessing the riddles with keen interest and pleasure.

Wei Zheng also wanted to go and guess the riddles written below the lanterns. She wanted Song Hui to go with her.

Song Hui looked at Wei Luo who was eating the Lantern Festival snacks next to him and shook his head, "You can go. We'll wait here."

He paused, and then said, "I'll have Du Yu follow you. There are too many people there. Don't go too far away."

Du Yu was his personal servant. He had been with him for three or four years.

Mew, this translation belongs to FuyuNeko.

Wei Zheng blew out her cheeks. Why would she want Du Yu? She didn't want to go there with Du Yu. She wanted to go with him.

But it couldn't be helped. Song Hui was insensitive to her feelings. No matter what she said, he wouldn't agree to go with her. And so, in a fit of pique, she didn't go either. She reluctantly stayed with them.

Wei Luo fed Chang Hong the last piece of the Lantern Festival snack, then she turned her head to look at Wei Zheng and questioningly asked, "Weren't you going to go guess the lantern riddles?"

Wei Zheng didn't look at her as she coldly said, "I don't want to go anymore."

Wei Luo slowly said, “Oh.” Then, she pointed to the front and said, “Let’s go there to watch puppet shows and shadow plays. I also saw people performing magic and juggling swords over there. Do you want to go?” Her question was directed toward Chang Hong and Song Hui.

Chang Hong naturally didn’t have an opinion. He always listened to her. As long as she wanted to look, he would accompany her without a doubt.

Song Hui was the same. He nodded and said, “Let’s go there then.”

Wei Zheng pursed her lips and was even unhappier.

Why was it that when she said she wanted to go guess the riddles, no one would go, but when Wei Luo said she wanted to go watch the puppet show, everyone would go? Her face was calm as she followed behind the three of them. She looked at Wei Luo’s back. Something strange flashed in her eyes, but it quickly disappeared.

The place that Wei Luo mentioned was livelier than the guessing riddles area. It was bustling with activity. There were people everywhere watching the exciting shows, especially the area with magical tricks being performed. It was completely packed with ring upon ring of people. Even if they squeezed, they wouldn’t be able to get closer.

Wei Luo was slightly regretful, “We won’t be able to see that magical transformation...”

Song Hui suggested going to the balcony of a teahouse that was directly in front of that area, but Wei Luo shook her head. The reason for watching these types of things was for the noise and excitement. Watching the show from the balcony wouldn’t have much meaning. But, this was okay. Other than the magic show, there were also other shows to watch.

As she was preparing to pull Chang Hong with her to watch the

show with people breathing out fire, she suddenly saw two lines of people walking on stilts behind them. These people on stilts that seemed as if they were as tall as mountains were walking towards their side.

These people were waving their shui sleeves. Although they were clearly swinging and swaying as they walked, their footing was very stable. They didn't look like slightest bit as if they were going to fall down. There was even a person holding another person while twirling around.

As the people walking on the stilts came closer, the numerous people on the street retreated. The street became more boisterous and more chaotic than before. People were crowded against one another from the chaos.

The crowd pushed Wei Luo forward. When she turned her head to look, she had already been separated from Chang Hong and Song Hui by a fair distance. Just as she was going to walk back, someone pushed her from behind. By chance, she bumped into the back of a person in front of her.

When the man turned around, she was in the middle of looking behind her and showed a slender neck and a delicate side profile of her face. The other person's movement came to a stop as he stared at her face and forgot how to walk.

Chang Hong and Song Hui had already seen where she was and were walking towards her spot.

The man that she had bumped into was motionless. The mob of people crowded around them and pushed him closer to her. In the end, he was almost half sticking to her. His arm was pushing the wall behind her. He lowered his head to look her in the eyes. He bit his lip and called out, "Wei Luo?"

She looked back in surprise and met his eyes. Next to the colorful lanterns, she finally saw his face clearly.

## Chapter 45.1

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Wei Luo didn't recognize his face at first. But, underneath the corner of his eye, there was a small swallow-shaped birthmark. Even after many years, the birthmark hadn't changed at all. Underneath the brightly colored lights, the sight of that birthmark crashed into her eyes and had her suddenly remembering his name.

Wei Luo's lips curved slightly and she said with a bit of indifference in her voice, "Li Song?"

The handsome teenager's face was gaping. Because he had been studying martial arts for many years, his facial features had become profound and determined. His skin was a healthy dark wheat color.

When that pair of bright as stars eyes looked at someone, there were also other new emotions in addition to the original rebelliousness. The line of people walking on stilts had walked away and the crowd of people gradually dispersed. But, he moved closer and closer to her. He stared at her eyes, "It's me."

These words were squeezed out through his teeth. He was the only one that knew the level of disgust and displeasure he felt towards her.

At that time, he had almost drowned in the Imperial Palace's lake and had also been tied to the target and shot at by Zhao Jie because of her. These two things had left a big psychological shadow on him. Even now, he still couldn't forget how he had struggled in the water and she had been on the shore with a sweetly provoking smile that couldn't hide the mocking in her eyes. The others had been deceived by her cute outer appearance. He was the only one that knew her cunning shadowy side! That despicable girl had grown up into a refined, budding beauty.

Why was she so good-looking? Wasn't the face a reflection of the

heart? She should have an ugly appearance! This beautiful face didn't match her inside at all.

Li Song pursed his lip. As he lifted his other hand to check if she was wearing a fake face, before his hand could touch her chin, he glimpsed a fist heading towards him from his peripheral vision!

He quickly ducked and looked at the side. With this movement, he stopped blocking Wei Luo.

Wei Chang Hong shielded Wei Luo, furrowed his eyebrows, and asked, "Ah Luo, did he bully you?"

He and Wei Luo looked similar. Li Song had mistaken them for each other when they were children. Now that they had grown up, one was so beautiful that her beauty was heart stopping and the other had a peerless elegance that couldn't be compared.

Li Song couldn't help but sigh with regret for a moment. The children born from the Wei family were truly attractive. There wasn't anyone in the country, much less than the capital that had his and her level of appearance.

Wei Luo shook her head.

The two of them let out a sigh in relief and then they heard her say, "He acted improperly towards me."

Li Song's breath stopped in his throat and he almost choked himself to death. He acted improperly towards her? When did this happen?

Wei Chang Hong's eyes were like knives when he looked at him. His posture seemed as if he was trying to make up for an extreme error and would immediately step forward to beat Li Song if he dared to admit it.

The capital's influential officials' sons would sometimes assemble together to either drink wine with courtesans in attendance or listen to ballads. So, most of them knew each other. However, Chang Hong almost never went those places. Thus, Li

Song wasn't very familiar with Chang Hong and only knew about his identity. Li Song didn't know whether or not Chang Hong had been dedicating himself to improving his martial arts skills these past several years. So, he wouldn't rashly start fighting at the current moment.

To bring up the subject of groping, Li Song couldn't resist think about the recent situation when the both of them had been pushed together by the crowd. The teenage girl's body was soft and frail. With his head lowered, he had almost covered her entire body. Her body had a light fragrance. The pure and sweet fragrance smelled good. If he didn't know her true nature, he would have really thought that she was an innocent and confused young girl and not a hateful little devil.

There had been so many people before. He had fit snugly next to her. Something soft had been pressed against him... exquisite and lovely...

Li Song finally realized what that was. He blushed. At least, the lighting was dusky and everyone couldn't see anomaly on his face. He didn't know where to start. He had to explain his actions for the first time ever, "There were too many people before. I didn't do that on purpose. If I had offended you..." His voice became hoarse, "Please forgive me."

Wei Luo didn't overthink like him. She usually didn't dare to touch that area herself because it was always sore. She ached dearly because his entire body had suddenly pressed down on her. In her heart, she hated him to death. Where would there be thoughts of a charming and gentle impure accident?! She burrowed herself in Chang Hong's embrace to pretend to be shy, "I won't forgive."

Li Song's thin lips were flattening into a line. He looked at the side of her face for a short period without saying anything.

Song Hui would normally step forward to help smooth things



over. But this time, he had the same thoughts as Chang Hong. He couldn't bear to see anyone pollute Wei Luo. And so, he also didn't say anything.

The atmosphere was somewhat awkward. Luckily, everyone was busy watching the performances and sideshows. There weren't many people paying attention to them, much less know their status and identity.

From behind Li Song, a clear and calm voice said, "How about I invite everyone to Emerald restaurant? As a way to apologize to everyone on behalf of Ah Song."

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They followed the sound to see a person standing beneath the numerous colored lanterns. The person was wearing a sapphire blue robe with a stylized flower pattern with a purple cashmere overcoat decorated with golden serpents. With his cheerful disposition, he looked as beautiful as the setting sun. He always had a smile on his face. He was sixteen years old, the same age as Li Song. But, he had an aura of nobility from birth with a sincere expression showing in his eyes.

Li Song was fifth Prince Zhao Zhang's study companion when they were children and the two of them had a good relationship. So, they didn't have to keep thinking to correctly guess the identity of this new person.

Since they were currently on the streets, Zhao Zhang gestured for them to skip making the customary salutations to him because it would be too conspicuous. His gaze stopped a moment longer when he was looking at Wei Luo, "Will fourth miss favor me with your presence?"

Wei Luo looked down. Soon after, she smiled, "Your highness's words are too serious. Since House Li's heir didn't do that intentionally, I'll forgive him. I wouldn't dare to trouble you with personally stepping forward to resolve this."

He said it was fine and walked forward, “Ah Song is like my brother. His problems are my problems, so this can’t be counted as troublesome.” As he said this, he was smiling. He seemed very amicable and approachable, “By lucky coincidence, I had hurriedly come out here tonight and haven’t eaten dinner yet. I heard that Emerald restaurant’s mutton soup is unique. Have you tried it before?”

The Emerald restaurant mentioned by Zhao Zhang was located at the end of this street. A family that had a long-established reputation owned it. The storefront was decorated gorgeously elaborate and the inside was very clean and neat. It was famous for its mutton soup. This mutton soup was made by thinly slicing mutton into diaphanous pieces, then the slices would be put into an already boiling soup. After cooking it for five to seven seconds, the slices could be taken out to eat. In addition to mutton, other dishes such as honey fire (T/N: cooked ham with lotus, wine, and a ton of sugar), tofu skin, and other small dishes could also be order.

Emerald restaurant’s smooth and rich soup base differentiated it from other places. And its fresh and tasty side dishes weren’t oily or greasy.

They went up the stairs and entered a private room. Zhao Zhang sat down at the head of the table. Li Song sat on his left and Song Hui and Chang Hong said on his right. Ah Luo and Wei Zheng sat across from Zhao Zhang.

Wei Zheng hadn’t said anything on the way here. As soon as she sat down, she couldn’t resist asking, “Fourth elder sister, how did you meet House Li’s heir? You’ve never mentioned him before. From what I see now, you seem quite familiar with him.”

Her words implied various meanings. She intentional mentioned this in front of other people to deliberately put Wei Luo on the spot. If Wei Luo didn’t have a good reason, the other people would mistakenly think that she and Li Song had a hidden relationship. This would greatly damage an unmarried girl’s reputation.

## Chapter 45.2

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Wei Luo laughed and looked at Wei Zheng in askance. Her words had another meaning as she said, “Fifth younger sister usually isn’t in your room and your whereabouts are usually unknown. Even if I want to tell you something, I wouldn’t have the chance.”

Wei Zheng’s face changed. She didn’t expect that Wei Luo would seized the opportunity to reverse the situation, “I...”

What did she mean that she usually wasn’t in her room? It was just that she frequently went to Gingko Courtyard. But the way that Wei Luo’s phrased her words made Wei Zheng seem like a promiscuous girl! Wei Zheng wanted to refute. But, when she thought of her mother’s awkward position in Duke Ying’s residence, it wouldn’t be good of her to say anything related to her mother. So, she could only smile and say, “I went to third branch’s courtyard to look for third elder sister. We were learning how to embroider peonies. Because we were too focused, I didn’t go back to my room often.”

Wei Luo smiled without saying anything. Unexpectedly, Wei Zheng didn’t understand that by explaining her actions, it would make it seem like she was concealing something.

The origin of Ah Luo and Li Song’s relationship had been a sensational major event when it had occurred. It was only because Wei Zheng had a narrow scope of the world that she still didn’t know about this.

Zhao Zhang brightly laughed and agreeably said, “... Were you the one that pushed Ah Song into the water? I heard he was sick for several days after that.”

Wei Luo looked at Li Song. Her smile was sweet as she asked, “Didn’t House Li’s heir willingly go into the water?”

Li Song snorted and turned his head so he wasn’t looking at her.

By lucky coincidence, at this moment, the waiters came into the room with the food. In addition to the side dishes they had ordered, the restaurant had also provided two complimentary desserts, xuefuren and lotus cake. Xuefuren were round pastries that looked like little dumplings, made with glutinous rice flour, and filled with various jams, so they tasted chewy and sweet. They were very popular with girls. To make the glutinous rice balls look prettier, Emerald restaurant decorated each of them with a small red bean on the top.

That dark red bean against the white ball.... it looked like... The snack had just been placed in front of Song Hui. Li Song could see it as soon as he lowered his head. His handsome face turned very red and he started coughing repeatedly.

Zhao Zhang asked in puzzlement, “Ah Song, are you not feeling well?”

He covered his mouth and waved his other hand. He succeeded in restraining himself with great difficulty from looking at Wei Luo. But, several charming and gentle pictures flashed through his mind. He continued to dully eat this meal with his thoughts preoccupied.

From time to time, he would see Wei Luo’s lovely pale face in his line of sight. Her smiling face was moving and disrupted his mood. In the end, he put down his chopsticks, stood up, and stiffly said, “I’m going outside to walk around.”

If he continued staying here, he would lose his self-control. It must be because the building was too hot, so he was feeling light-headed. He wouldn’t be feeling so abnormal otherwise!

———

Inside the private room, Zhao Zhang was very happily chatting with Song Hui.

Zhao Zhong was close to Count Zhongyi’s family and frequently

interacted with Song Hui. Previously, Song Hui had been busy studying for his exam, so the two of them hadn't seen each other in a long time. Since this meeting was a rare opportunity, they had many words to say to each other.

Zhao Zhang had wanted to talk with Chang Hong, but he didn't succeed. Chang Hong had an antisocial personality and he wouldn't even acknowledge an unfamiliar person. Today, because of Zhao Zhang's status as the fifth prince, Chang Hong had politely said a few words, but he couldn't say any more than that. Zhao Zhang was magnanimous and didn't ask him to continue speaking. He even invited Chang Hong to hunt wild animals with him outside the capital at the beginning of spring.

The capital had a local tradition. The capital's nobility all enjoyed going hunting near Xun Mountain at the beginning of the spring for two days and two nights. Whoever hunted the most animals by amount and weight would be this year's most outstanding and valiant person. The teenage male nobility were young and vigorous, so they liked to use this type of method to demonstrate their abilities. This was why this activity was so popular for a time and had been handed down to this generation.

Chang Hong instinctively refused, "I don't..."

Zhao Zhang stopped him, "Fifth sir, don't rush in rejecting. Wait until that day comes. I'll send someone to your house to ask you on that day. It won't be too late for you to decide then."

Chang Hong thought about it and reluctantly nodded his agreement.

After they finished dinner, as they were leaving Emerald restaurant, the fireworks were set off at the south of the lake by lucky coincidence. Bundles of sparkles rocketed into the sky and were followed by loud booms. The sparkles blossomed into a gorgeous and dazzling display of fireworks that illuminated half of the night sky.

Wei Luo was standing downstairs. He carefully looked at her. The light shined on her face and alternatively fluctuated between brightening and darkening. The light was like her. It had a thousand different faces. In one moment, it was innocent and cute. In the next moment, it was deceitful and willful. In another moment, it was dark and vicious... Li Song frowned and looked away from her.

Song Hui brought Wei Luo, Wei Zheng, and Chang Hong back to the entrance of Duke Ying's residence. After he watched them enter the residence, he turned around and left by riding on a horse.

Soon after he left, a person riding a horse came out of the shadows.

The person was dressed in black and had a muscular body. It was Yang Hao.

He looked at Duke Ying's residence's entrance and then he looked at the direction that Song Hui had departed. He held onto the horse tighter, shouted for the horse to move, and disappeared into the darkness.

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At the same time, this was happening, Zhao Jie had just returned from Binzhou. He had been there for nearly two years.

Huang River had breached its dam on both sides and flooded eleven cities. This was a serious calamity that had caused people to be in dire poverty. When he had arrived there, the plague had just started spreading. Managing the plague had taken him half a year. After that event, he had to stay there to strengthen and secure the riverside and dam. While he was there, he was plagued with trivial matters every day.

Without knowing it, he had stayed in Binzhou for a long time. Now that he had finally resolved everything, he could go back the capital to report. Originally, he had thought he could hurry and

come back before the Spring Lantern Festival. Unexpectedly, he wasn't able to get back here in time. There was a heavy rainstorm that delayed the journey on the way here, so he had just come back to his residence today.

The inside of the capital was brightly lit with lanterns and exploding fireworks. The night was bustling with noise and excitement.

He had changed into a green brocade robe and also had a crane overcoat draped over his shoulders. He had walked to the main room's doorway. After improving himself by practice in Binzhou, his eyes had become deeper from when he was a teenager. They were as deep as the sea and the depths couldn't be seen. However, his temperament hadn't changed. He remained noble and cold.

There was a person standing in front of him. It was the person that had appeared at Duke Ying's residence, Yang Hao.

Yang Hao cupped his hands in obeisance, then Yang Hong told him what he had just seen, "Fourth miss and Sir Song Hui had left the residence together. On the way to the festival, they accidentally met Prince Ruyang's heir and the fifth prince. They were in Emerald restaurant for an hour. This subordinate followed them the entire way and personally saw fourth miss entering Duke Ying's residence before coming back to report."

Zhao Jie didn't move. There was something hidden in his eyes.

He waved his hand and turned around. He thought of Wei Luo's vividly expressive little face and his lips curved up slightly. When he had left, she was only eleven. Now, she was at the prime of her youth. What did she look like now that she was grown up?

Yang Hao paused. He started to speaking, and then stopped, "Your highness..."

Zhao Jie looked at him to indicate for him to speak.

Yang Hao summoned up the courage to say, "Prince Ruyang's

heir... he embraced fourth miss on the street...”

The smile on Zhao Jie’s lips disappeared. His eyes gradually became cold.



## Chapter 46.1

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The passing night wind was chilly and lifted up the edges of his clothes, but he didn't feel anything. His dark eyes were enigmatic. It was impossible to tell whether he was feeling happy or angry.

He took out turquoise and silver waist accessory from his sleeve and whirled it around in his hands. Who knew what he was thinking? The waist accessory had a little squirrel carved from turquoise. There were two silver nuts hanging below the squirrel. The shape and look was unique and unusual. He had thought of Wei Luo as soon as he saw this waist accessory while he was in Binzhou.

When Wei Luo was a child, she liked to eat chestnuts, walnuts, pine nuts, peanuts, and so on in his carriage. When she was eating them, her cheeks would be bulging and she sounded like a rustling little animal. Her two dark whirling eyes showed her cunning and quick-wittedness. No one knew what strange ideas she held in her mind. She was smarter and cuter than a squirrel, but this squirrel on the waist accessory really resembled her. The look that a squirrel had when it was eating had been carved realistically.

At the time, he had bought this waist accessory without the slightest hesitation. He had decided to wait and give this to her when he returned to the capital. But, he didn't expected that he would have to wait for two years. Now that he had finally returned from Binzhou, did she still remember him?

She had grown up and would go out with other men to look at colorful, flower lanterns. Would she still sweetly and stickily call him big brother?

Zhao Jie restrained the emotions in his eyes. He held the little squirrel in his palm and gradually closed his hand to firmly hold the accessory.

Yang Hao saw his action. He couldn't resist sweating a bit for the

fourth miss and hesitantly asked, “Your highness, do you still want to send over this accessory tonight?”

Zhao Jie pondered for a moment before turning around to walk inside, “No, this Prince will personally give it to her tomorrow.”

The dark sky showed how late it was. If he went there tonight at such a late time, it would undoubtedly scare her. He wasn’t anxious. He had already waited for so long. He had the patience to wait another night.

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Early next morning, Wei Luo received a written invitation sent from the palace. Princess Tianji had invited her to the palace.

Wei Luo sat at a round table. As she ate her breakfast, she listened to Jin Lu speak. She didn’t have any suspicions. Although she was no longer Zhao Liuli’s study companion, she would still go to the palace every now and then. She and Zhao Jiuli had a close and very good relationship in private. They were best friends. When Zhao Liuli had slightly embarrassing problems, she liked to talk it over with Ah Luo. So much so that when Liuli invited her today, she thought that there must be something troubling her.

Zhao Liuli was only one year older than her. Because their relationship was good, she didn’t have any qualms with telling her everything. Recently, Liuli had her first period and she had enthusiastically told Wei Luo about popular tips for dealing with periods. Unfortunately, Wei Luo had already experienced this in her previous life. She wasn’t the slightest bit curious and couldn’t echo her enthusiasm.

Today’s weather was relatively warmer. After Wei Luo had finished breakfast, she changed into her pine flower decorated golden short-sleeved jacket that had been newly made at New Years. Below that, she wore an embroidered cherry blossom pink full skirt. She sat on her bed to wait for Bai Lan. Bai Lan selected a pair of blue silk shoes lined with sheepskin inside.

(T/N: Look at the 2nd cover for “ChongFei Manual” for Ah Luo’s outfit described above. If you look really closely, you can see that she’s wearing the little squirrel waist accessory)

As Bai Lan helped her put on her shoes, she said, “It looks like miss’s feet haven’t grown in the last two years...”

They were so small and only a little bigger than her hand.

But, this was fine. Men like women with small feet. A woman’s feet would be loved dearly if it was like lotus white jade and could be held in a person’s hands. Her miss’s feet were especially delicate and exquisite and her toes were slightly pink. Bai Lan didn’t think feet were particularly nice-looking before, but now that she had seen Wei Luo’s feet, she could only sigh. There were certain people that were born beautiful everywhere. You couldn’t resist envying them.

Wei Luo looked left and right. She had never paid attention to this issue. Seeing that it wasn’t early anymore, she stood up and said, “Let’s go. It’ll be noon soon.”

There was a green carriage waiting at the entrance. It was only now that Wei Luo thought that something seemed off.

In the past, when Zhao Liuli invited her to the palace, she would ride Duke Ying’s residence’s carriage there. Why was a carriage expressively sent here to bring her there? Could there be a serious matter? Wei Luo entered and sat down in the carriage.

Then, she lifted the carriage’s curtain to ask the mama, “Who sent you here to pick me up?”

The mama reverently and respectfully said, “To respond to fourth miss, it was Princess Tianji’s order.”

It seemed that this wasn’t a mistake. She sat back down. There clearly wasn’t anything wrong over there, but she still felt as if something was different from the usual visits.

The carriage stopped at the harem’s entrance. Wei Luo followed

the mamato Empress Chen's palace. Zhao Liuli had already been waiting a long time inside the palace. As soon as she heard that Wei Luo had arrive, she ran out from her warm room.

She smiled as she greeted her, "Ah Luo."

Due to Zhao Liuli's longtime frail health and sickness, her skin was paler than the average person's. Her skin was so abnormally pale that it was almost transparent. Her skeleton framework was delicate and her small face was only the size of a palm. But when she optimistically and cheerfully smiled, her two dimples would be revealed. She didn't seem like a sickly person that had a lingering illness at all.

During the past few years, Empress Chen had scoured the world for rare and valuable medicinal herbs to improve Liuli's health. She had finally raised her to be healthier than when she was a child. However, Liuli still wasn't the same as other people. Her emotions couldn't fluctuate too much. She couldn't cry or laugh too much. She couldn't be allowed to get sick. When she became sick, it was much more serious than other people.

Empress Chen watched over her very closely. She wouldn't allow her to go anywhere other than Qingxi Palace. When she was bored, she could only invite Ah Luo to the palace to relieve her boredom by talking. She would listen to Ah Luo talk about things that happened outside the palace as a way to console her self.

She took Ah Luo to her warm room and they sat down on the rosewood couch. She curiously asked, "Yesterday was the Spring Lantern Festival. Did you go out?"

Ah Luo nodded, "I went to look at the colorful lanterns. I also saw magical illusion shows and puppet shows..." She thought for a moment, "I also ate fried sweet rice dumplings."

Zhao Liuli's had an expression of envy on her face. She had never eaten fried sweet rice dumplings and she didn't know what a puppet show was. Ah Luo lived so freely. Unlike her who could

only live inside Qingxi Palace, Ah Luo could go anywhere that she wanted.

Even when it was only going to the gardens, she still had to inform her imperial mother first. She supported her cheek with her hand and exceedingly enviously said, “What does fried sweet rice dumplings taste like? Is it tasty? Is it any different from other sweet rice dumplings?”

Ah Luo saw her gluttonous face and couldn’t resist smiling. She intentionally said, “It was sweet and filled with red bean paste. It was hot and tasty.”

Liuli revealed her yearning in her expression. She quickly stopped herself before her imagination took flight. She sighed and said, “Never mind, I probably won’t have a chance to eat it.”

Ah Luo saw her pitiful look and almost couldn’t bear it. She stopped making fun of her and had Jin Lu bring over the thing that she had prepared. “I couldn’t bring you fried sweet rice dumplings. But, I brought something else instead. Do you want to see?”

Zhao Liuli brightened up and repeatedly nodded. Her previous gloomy mood was swept away.

Jin Lu walked forward with a red sandalwood box that had a decorative pattern. The box was opened. There were snacks from street corners and some small toys inside the box. One of the snacks was a bag of sugary white balls wrapped inside oilpaper. It was hawthorns with sugar added. Liuli picked one up to eat. The sweet and sour flavor was excellent. She immediately became happier and asked with pleasant surprise, “What’s this?”

Wei Luo thought that it was pitiful that Liuli hadn’t had sugared hawthorn by this age and easily told her the name. She placed the entire bag in front of Liuli, “Eat more. You don’t have to worry about overeating this. Eating this will have health benefits.”

In addition to the sugared hawthorn, there were also folded up

colored lanterns, puppets, and dolls inside the box. Wei Luo took out a tiger puppet and wore it on her hand. She curled up her fingers to a threatening gesture, “Look, this can be worn on your hand and played with like this...” The tiger puppet on her hand opened its mouth and went over to bite Liuli’s hand.

Zhao Liuli burst out in laughter. Then, she also put on a puppet doll on her hand and acted out the role of bride begging for mercy, “Hero, please spare my life...”

The two young girls had a flash of inspiration and interest. They acted out “Bride Meets Tiger” with great enjoyment and untiring happiness.

## Chapter 46.2

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In the end, Zhao Liu laughed so much that she fell over on the couch. She treated the two puppets as if they were treasures and put them on her treasure grid shelves. “This was so much fun. When older brother Yang Zhen comes back, I’m going to perform this for him.”

Wei Luo wiped away the tears in her eyes from laughing too much. She was taken aback for a moment when she heard the name Yang Zhen, “Isn’t he always by your side? Why isn’t he here today?”

Yang Zhen had been protecting Zhao Liuli for six years since she was eight years old. He was like a shadow that always followed behind her. As soon as Zhao Liuli was in danger, he would immediately come out. Several years had passed, Zhao Liuli had remained unharmed and his martial arts skills had become better and better. He also became more and more silent. There were times when he didn’t say a single word for an entire day. He only spoke when Zhao Liu said something to him.

Zhao Liuli seemed more surprise than her. She turned around to ask, “My older brother returned yesterday. Yang Zhen went to Prince Jing’s residence to meet my older brother. You didn’t know?”

Wei Luo froze in surprise. She really didn’t know.

When Zhao Jie went to Binzhou a few years ago to deal with Huang River breaching its dam, he didn’t say anything to her before leaving. She only found out from Liuli after he had been gone for two month. He didn’t send her any letters during the past few years. She didn’t ask Liuli about him either, so Liuli naturally didn’t mention him. Wei Luo didn’t know anything about his current situation, much less knowing when he would return.

So he had returned yesterday? Calculating the time, two years

had already passed since she last saw him.

Wei Luo blinked, “Why would I know?”

At this moment, she discovered that Zhao Liuli’s tone was a bit strange as if she should have known this information. But, she really didn’t have any communications with Zhao Jie. How could she have known this?!

Zhao Liuli stiffened and stammered, “I thought... Duke Ying would tell you this after going home when the morning imperial court session was over...”

Wei Luo said, “Oh. Grandfather never discusses matters of the imperial court with us.”

Zhao Liu nervously turned away for her line of sight. With a compromising tone, she said, “Oh...”

Fortunately, Wei Luo thought of something else and didn’t pay attention to her strange behavior.

Zhao Jie had returned. She met Zhao Zhang yesterday on the street. During the past few years, the clash for power between the two of them was only barely not explicitly shown on the outside. Zhao Jie was continuously suppressing Zhao Zhang’s power and force. From the beginning, Zhao Zhang wasn’t as vicious and merciless as Zhao Jie. Plus, he was younger than Zhao Jie. It was inevitable that he would be forced to somewhat restrain himself for the time being.

Emperor Chong Zhen had sent Zhao Jie to Binzhou with the reason that this would temper his abilities. But, in reality, he had done this so that Zhao Zhang would have time to take a breather in the capital. These two sons of his was one of his strategies to check and balance the powers of two influential clans.

It wouldn’t work if one of them were missing. Unfortunately, Zhao Jie’s abilities and influence were becoming increasingly powerful during these past few years. He had already gradually



separated from Emperor Chong Zhen's control and had left the Emperor feeling a faint sense of uneasy.

But, there was one point that Wei Luo didn't understand. Everyone said that Zhao Jie was vicious and that he would seek revenge for the smallest grievances. But, she felt that this wasn't true? When she was younger, she had guarded herself against him.

She had thought that he treated her well because she was Duke Ying's granddaughter. Later on, she gradually felt that this wasn't entirely true. Her grandfather had long become one of his fans. He didn't need to use her as a way to maintain his relationship with Duke Ying. However, he still kept giving her little toys and treats.

Why? Wei Luo rested her cheek on her hand. She couldn't figure it out.

After lunch, Wei Luo said good-bye to Zhao Liuli and left Chen Hua Hall. She thought about the roses in her backyard that had blossomed. She was going to pluck some petals and ask Han-shi to use them to prepare fragrant lotion. The fragrant lotion made by Han-shi was the best. It wasn't greasy or sticky. When she finished applying it on her body every day, her skin would be smooth and tender and her skin wouldn't be dry and dull in winter.

Qing Xi Palace's main front door was on the path to leaving the palace. She walked faster and past the doorway.

She hadn't walked two steps before suddenly stopping

In front of her path, there was a blue figure standing not far away. He was standing underneath a cypress tree with his side figure facing her. He was as tall and straight as a pine tree. The side profile of his face was handsome. It seemed as if he was holding something in hands. His slender hands were slowly and gently stroking the object. From his peripheral vision, he saw her. He turned around. His thin lips curved up in a smile and diluted the coldness in his eyes. He silently looked at her.

Wei Luo slightly froze. She hesitated for a moment before immediately stepping forward and calling out, “Big brother...” She paused and changed what she was going to say, “Older brother Prince Jing.”

Zhao Jie waited until she had walked in front of him. His gaze fell on her rosy little face. He held out the turquoise squirrels waist accessory and quietly responded, “En.” He had already been waiting for her here for two hours. He had asked Zhao Liuli in advance to bring her into the palace in order to see her. It wasn’t easy.

The tender and delicate young girl had grown up was taller now. When he left, her head was only up to his chest. Now, she was just up to his shoulders. Her face had elongated and had become the standard oval face. The chubbiness of her cheeks had decreased. Her appearance was still exquisite and delicate. Her nose and mouth hadn’t changed much. But, he didn’t know why. The more he looked, the more her face increased in attractiveness.

She was so beautiful. No wonder Prince Ruyang’s little heir couldn’t resist being tempted by her.

# Chapter 47.1

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Zhao Jie stopped looking directly at her. He leaned over and tied the turquoise squirrel waist accessory that had been in his hands on her waist. It seemed as if he didn't care the slightest bit about bending his waist for her in front of other people.

Wei Luo was surprised and reflexively retreated, "What is older brother Prince Jing doing?"

His voice was low and carried masculine calmness, "Don't move. This is a gift that I selected for you in Binzhou." After he finished hanging the accessory, he stood up and asked, "Do you like it?"

Wei Luo held it in her palm to look and discovered that it was a little squirrel eating nuts. She asked in confusion, "Why did you give me this?"

He curved up his lips in a smile, but didn't explain.

Wei Luo looked at it left and right and felt that it was pretty cute. Since she didn't know that he had given her this because the squirrel and her looked similar, she looked up and sweetly thanked him. She finally remembered to ask him, "I heard that older brother Prince Jing had returned to the capital yesterday. Are you here to see the Empress?"

He didn't speak. In a short while, he slowly nodded.

He had indeed recently gone to Zhaoyang Palace to see Empress Chen. However, she wasn't the reason that he entered the palace this time. As for who it was, there wasn't a reason for him to let her know. He didn't want to frighten her.

The turquoise squirrel waist accessory was pressed down on her cherry blossom pink full skirt. The wind gently raised the edges of the skirt, so that when she walked, her pair of tiny blue silk shoes lined with sheepskin inside was partly hidden and partly visible.

Zhao Jie could see the shoes as soon as he looked down. The

expression shown in his eyes was a mystery. He stopped looking at her shoes and looked at the young girl's pretty face instead. He lifted his lips to say, "Why aren't you asking me where I've been or what I've done for the past two years?"

Wei Luo saw that he didn't have the intention to leave. She thought that he had already finished his business, so he was conveniently accompanying her in leaving the palace. She didn't have any further doubts.

While walking on the winding road paved with limestone, she noticed that this wasn't the path that she usually took. This path was narrow. It was spacious enough if it there was only one person walking. But if there were two people walking, they would have to walk shoulder to shoulder.

She wasn't tall enough, so her shoulder could only touch Zhao Jie's arm. She wanted to take a step back, but Zhao Jie slanted his head to look at her and she felt trapped as if she couldn't advance or retreat.

She could only continue walking with him side by side. She pulled back her shoulders and said, "Big brother, you didn't say anything when you left. I only found out through Liuli after you were gone for two months already. I know that you had to go to Binzhou because Huang River had breached its dam there. The common people were suffering and you had to go there to manage the damages caused by the flood."

This translation belongs to FuyuNeko. Please read from the original source, mew.

There were two paths in front of Qingxi Palace's main entrance. One path was her usual path. The other path was this secluded small path. Empress Chen and palace servant girls only occasionally took this path. Perhaps, Zhao Jie was used to walking this path with Empress Chen... her mind was indulging in flights of fantasy.

Zhao Jie's eyes showed a trace of a smiling expression. The young girl's slippery dark eyes were spinning chaotically. How could a person not know what she was thinking in her mind? Zhao Jie's facial expression didn't change. Pretending to be honest, he continued, "I thought I would return in three or four months when I was sent there, so it didn't seem worth mentioning. Unexpectedly, I was there for two years and could only come back to the capital yesterday."

He walked unhurriedly to coordinate with her pace. He casually said, "Yesterday was Spring Lantern Festival. How did you celebrate it?"

Wei Low slightly raised her pink lips in a smile, "I went outside to see the colored lanterns. It was very lively outside from the numerous people."

"Oh. Whom did you go with?"

Wei Luo didn't have anything to hide and told him everything, "I went with Chang Hong, Wei Zheng ..." She paused while speaking, "and older brother Song Hui."

He stopped. His dark phoenix eyes were fixed on her, but he didn't say anything. That pair of eyes could hide too many emotions. Without any reason, his gaze made Wei Luo feel afraid. She retreated half a step and said, "Big brother?"

He looked away from her and smilingly said, "I was on horseback."

These words weren't false. When he was left with three to five days of travel away from the capital, he would have to change four or five horses every day. He was in a rush to get back the entire way. Unfortunately, he still wasn't able to return on time. While he was on a bumpy horseback, she was inside the capital strolling around to view colored lanterns and guessing riddles with other men. He was a bit angry as he thought this.

Wei Luo didn't know what he was thinking in his heart, so she only thought that he was somewhat pitiful. During the past two years, he probably didn't live very well in Binzhou. She had heard that the plague had spread there and thousands of people had died. Although he looked healthy and undamaged right now, he must have suffered a lot. He wasn't even able to celebrate Spring Lantern Festival. Her heart softened and she stepped forward to grab his sleeve that was embroidered with golden clouds, "I recently gave Liuli a few water lanterns. I still have two left. Big brother, do you want to release them with me?"

Zhao Jie froze. His eyes revealed a trace of his surprise.

She pursed her lips and thought that he didn't know. So, she patiently explained, "When you release a water lantern, you can make a wish. Do you have anything that you want to wish for?"

He faintly smiled. He finally understood that this young girl was trying to comfort him through this method. He looked into her eyes and slowly said, "There is."

---

At this time, Wei Luo anxiously wanted to go home right away to blend her fragrant rose lotion. But, she could only delay doing this.

She went to western part of the palace's lakeside with Zhao Jie. It was the beginning of spring at this time. The ice on the lake's surface had already melted, but the temperature was still somewhat cold. A burst of chilly wind blew through the scene. It was so cold that she covered her mouth as she sneezed.

Zhao Jie saw this and took off the sky blue silk overcoat lined with marten fur that he was wearing and draped it over her shoulders.

She quickly refused and took it off to return to him. Without even mentioning that men and women were different, so interactions between the two must be careful, the mere sight of her

wearing Prince Jing's clothes was already enough for her to be unable to explain herself... But, Zhao Jie used his hand to press down on her shoulder. His large and powerful palm had a force of oppression that wouldn't allow any refusal. Her margin for refusal vanished in a flash.

She could obediently drape the clothing over herself. She asked with uneasiness, "Big brother, aren't you cold? You're not wearing much either."

He lowered his head, smiled, and told her, "I'm a man."

Wei Luo said, "Oh." She didn't continue disputing this issue with him. She looked around. There wasn't anyone else here at this time of the year. Because the temperature was too cold, no one was willing to come to the lakeside. Only the two of them were leisurely enough to come here to elegantly release the water lanterns.

## Chapter 47.2

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Wei Luo took the two water lanterns from Jin Lu, unfold them, gave one to Zhao Jie, and kept one in her own hands. She explained to him, “Use the match to light the lampwick inside, place the lantern on the lake, and make a wish. If the water lantern floats very far away, the wish will come true.”

She didn't believe in this. This was just a lie to deceived ignorant little girls. She was long past that age. When she had gone outside with Chang Hong yesterday, Wei Zheng had suggested going to release water lanterns, but she didn't go then. In the end, Wei Zheng had returned with disappointment and her eyes as cold as ice fragments.

Wei Luo hadn't expected that she would have refused Wei Zheng yesterday and suggest releasing water lanterns herself today. Life really was fickle.

Zhao Jie held the water lantern, took the match from her hand, lighted that lampwick. Surrounded by the cold wind, the lampwick's faint light was flickering.

After Wei Luo released her own water lantern, she turned her around and saw that he was stilling standing there, so she asked, “Older brother Prince Jing, why aren't you coming over here?”

He walked forward, crouched down at the edge of the lake, and copied her actions in putting the water lantern into the water. As he was about let go, Wei Luo suddenly stopped him and hurriedly said, “That's not how you do that. If you place it into the water like that, the lantern will sink into the water in a few moments.”

His lips slightly curved up. His mellow and sweet-sound voice unhurriedly asked, “How should I place it then?”

So, Wei Luo tried teaching him how to place it. Unfortunately, he seemed completely unable to learn. A glance showed that the



candle in the lantern was about to be extinguished. She could only step closer and personally hold his hand to teach him. When their two hands were folded together, she gently pushed. The water lantern slowly floated away. “Just like this, gently push it...”

Instead of looking at the lantern, Zhao Jie was looking at their hands. Her hand was small and pale. When it was placed together with his, there was a clear difference. The palm of that small, soft hand carried warmth. The warmth traveled from the back of his hand to his insides and continued spreading until it arrived at his heart. His hand moved slightly and seemed as if it couldn't resist turning over to hold her hand.

Fortunately, she moved away first and withdrew her hand into her sleeve as if she was completely unaware of what she had just done. She surveyed the surface of the lake. Her line of sight followed the two floating water lanterns. After a while, she turned around to smile and ask him, “Older brother Prince Jing, what did you wish for?”

Zhao Jie held back his smile. The back of his hand still had her residual warmth and made a person want to linger and reflect. He said, “Peace, security, and stability for the entire country.”

Actually, he wasn't thinking anything when the water lantern was released. Her lovable, pretty small face had been in front of him. Any thought would have been superfluous at that moment. But, those eight words weren't false. They were his ultimate ambition. If you really wanted to look into those words, a condition should be added – and under his control.

Wei Luo didn't continue the conversation. If he really wanted to fight for the position of the emperor, it wouldn't be a problem at all. But, she didn't know why. In her previous life, Zhao Jie willingly acted as a regent. At that time, he had complete control of the imperial court. Zhao Zhang was only a figurehead that was completely controlled in the palm of Zhao Jie's hand. He could have easily replaced Zhao Zhang as the emperor. Why didn't he do

it? Or, perhaps he did do it, but she didn't live to that day?

It wasn't impossible. Who told her to die so early?

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They left the palace. Wei Luo stood in front of the carriage and was preparing to say good-bye to Zhao Jie and return to Duke Ying's residence.

Zhu Geng walked forward with a jubube red, tall and sturdy horse. Zhao Jie leapt up onto the horse and held the reins. With a smile on his face, he said to her, "Let's go, this prince will bring you back."

She reflexively refused, "I can return by myself. Big brother, you have your own matters. You don't need to take care of me."

He lowered his head to glance at her for a moment. His gaze landed on the green carriage behind her, "This is the prince's carriage. Liuli said she invited you to the palace today, so I had people pick you up."

Wei Luo finally suddenly realized. No wonder she was confused for a moment when she went out today. Zhao Liuli had never been this thoughtful in her actions before. Since this carriage was his, it wouldn't be polite to keep refusing. She could only say thank you again and lowered her head to enter the carriage.

When she thought about it again, she felt there was still something wrong. Why would he know that she was going to the palace today and especially send people to pick her up?

When she had left Qingxi Palace, he was just standing there at the entrance. A single glance showed that he was waiting for something. Was he waiting for her? Did he wait for her just to give her this squirrel waist accessory? Wei Luo lowered her head and fiddled with that little turquoise squirrel. The more that she looked at, the more it seemed familiar. Had she seen it before?

The carriage slowly traveled through the streets of the capital.

The curtain would occasionally be blown up by the wind and it would be possible to see the nearby person.

Zhao Jie was riding the horse next to the carriage and looking forward. His eyes were as deep as the night and his eyebrows looked handsome. His body was tall and straight. He wasn't thin and weak like those Confucian scholars. Instead, his shoulders were wide and the muscles on his back were strong and had gone through polishing. As she was looking, it seemed that he had noticed her spectating sight. He turned around to look at the carriage. His eyes held a faint smiling expression. It seemed as if he knew that she was looking at him, but was very happy that she was peeking at him.

Wei Luo's face froze. She felt somewhat uneasy. Luckily, the curtain fell down and blocked his line of sight. She sighed in relief.

The carriage soon stopped at the entrance to Duke Ying's residence. She stepped on the pedal to exit the carriage. Zhao Jie dismounted and walked to her side, "Go home, okay?"

She nodded, took off the overcoat to give back to him, smiled, and showed her two dimples as a result, "Thank you older brother Prince Jing."

He curved his lips. He had resisted the entire way here, but he couldn't resist in the end. He raised his hand to stroke the red birthmark between her eyebrows. While he gently stroked it, he asked, "Why didn't you keep your bangs?"

Last year, the hair that covered her forehead was tied back. Fourth aunt said she had grown up and having bangs would make her seem too childish. After her bangs were gone, the red birthmark between her eyebrows was revealed on her bright and clean forehead. The red birthmark was like a vital finishing touch. Although Zhao Jie thought it looked good, he felt somewhat listless when he thought about other men being able to see it now and not just him.

Wei Luo blinked, “Does it look bad?”

He laughed and said, “Looks good.”

That’s fine then. As long as it looked good, it was fine. Wei Luo saw that he wasn’t leaving and thought that he had other matters. However, after she waited for a while, he still didn’t say anything. So, she stepped closer to the entrance and said, “Older brother Prince Jing, if there’s nothing else, I’m going home...”

He called out her name to stop her, “Ah Luo.”

Wei Luo stopped. She didn’t understand his meaning.

“Did you meet Li Song when you went outside yesterday?”

Wei Luo opened her small mouth in surprise. She didn’t understand why he would know this.

Who would have expected that his next words would leave her even more astonished?

He looked at her with a focused gaze. There was clearly a smile in his eyes, but he gave off a feeling that he was actually very unhappy, “He hugged you.”

The author has something to say:

Ah Luo thought that the squirrel seems familiar. It’s because the squirrel is you... =。=

# Chapter 48.1

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Wei Luo's eyes widened. How did he know?

When did they hug? Why did he say it so seriously? Although she didn't know why he was saying this, she still had to explain, "He didn't hug me... I accidentally bumped into him and we were crowded together by the people around us."

At that time, she couldn't control her own movement because of the bustling crowd. If she could, she wouldn't have wanted to bump into Li Song. But, not only did she bump into him, he also firmly pressed her against the wall. But, why would Zhao Jie know this? Didn't he go home last night without going out into the streets?

Zhao Jie saw through her doubtfulness. Without changing his expression, he explained, "Yang Hao returned to the capital earlier. On the way back, he saw the two of you by chance." His eyebrows were furrowed when he said, "Are you two still in contact with each other?"

Wei Luo shook her head no. Who would want to talk to that person? It would be best if she never saw him again. "We just met on the street by coincidence and exchanged a few words."

She recalled something and after hesitating for a moment, she still chose to be honest, "He was with the fifth prince. The fifth prince also invited Chang Hong and older brother Song Hui to participate in the Spring Hunt Ceremony."

Zhao Jie seemed lost in his thoughts. He smiled and asked, "What else did old five say?"

Wei Luo shook her head, "He didn't say anything else."

He stroked her head, "You should go too. This prince will hunt a fox for you at that time."

"Older brother Prince Jing, you're going too?"

He nodded.

The Spring Hunting Ceremony was an opportunity for the nobility to show to their abilities. Although Emperor Chong Zhen wouldn't be present, the results would be reported to him so that he would know. Every year, the emperor would bestow a reward for the top three hunters, so this was a good opportunity to stand out and be noticed by the emperor.

The youths were hot-blooded. They couldn't wait to show off their youthful vigor. While they were hunting, they liked to invite young woman from noble families to watch their hunting. After all, the presence of women was necessary to energize hunting's excitement. It would be too regretful for a bunch of young men to fight and sweat profusely without young women to admire and appreciate them.

This wasn't a rare event. There was a villa on Zhang Xun Mountain with scenic views. The imperial family devoted this villa for young men and women to stay during the hunt for two days and one night, so there wasn't a worry about a place to stay.

Wei Luo didn't immediately agree. Instead, she said, "I'll go if Chang Hong goes."

She didn't enjoy going to this type of lively event. Compared to watching a group of men competing with each other for hunting the most animals, she would enjoy fiddling with scented lotions in her own room more. Also, she didn't like foxes... She feared all long-fur animals. When she was a child, she had been scared to death of the three kittens being raised by Zhao Jie. Foxes were even worse. She understood that Chang Hong wouldn't be going, so these words also had the meaning of refusal.

If they stood outside for too long, it would inevitably attract the attention of people passing by.

She said her good-bye to him, "Older brother Prince Jing, if there's nothing else, I'm going inside."

He didn't stop her this time. He stood at the entrance and watched her entering the residence until her figure disappeared, then he turned around and mounted the horse.

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Wei Luo plucked half a basket of roses from the greenhouse, brought them over to Han-shi's Orchid Courtyard, and asked Han-shi to help her by creating a new scented lotion.

Han-shi agreed and said to come back after three days.

Wei Luo still didn't leave after she finished talking about this matter. She sat down on the beautiful wooden couch and embarrassedly mumbled, "Aunt Han, do you have any method for dealing with a sore chest?"

Because she had already experience this in her previous life, she couldn't tolerate having to go through this again. Her breasts felt sore and swollen, especially when she was walking. It would be great if there were a way to make them not hurt, or make them finish growing faster... So that she wouldn't be in pain every day. Han-shi knew so much. She probably knew a way to fix this problem, right? She didn't have a mother and wouldn't be comfortable asking fourth aunt this type of thing. She could only come here to ask Han-shi.

Han-shi listened to her problem and as expected, she did have a method. Han-shi turned around, took a small cloisonné enamel bottle from her cabinet, put the bottle into Wei Luo's hands, and said, "Pour a little bit of this medicine into your palm, after its warmed up, rub it on the area that hurts every night. This medicine can only speed up the growth a little bit. It can't actually remove the pain, but the result is the same. They won't hurt anymore after they're done growing. Consistently try using this medicine for a few months."

Wei Luo blushed from her blunt words. She accepted the bottle and made a sound of acknowledgement. She held the bottle in her

hand as if it were a hot potato, quickly said her good-bye, and didn't continue staying in Orchid Courtyard any longer.



## Chapter 48.2

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After she finished bathing that night, she sat down in her bed, put down the bedside curtains, and tried the medicine that Han-shi had given her. Her skin felt hot after she had finished rubbing the medicine into her skin in circles. She couldn't tell yet if the medicine would be effective.

The effect wasn't obvious in the first few days. It still hurt. About half a month later the medicine showed its effects, the pain of growing was still there, but it was a little bit lighter than before. Not only that, when she was wearing her dudou, it felt tighter than before. At the very least, she was growing up.

Without a better option, she had Jin Lu sew her a few more dudou with her new measurement. She continued using the medicine that Han-shi gave her, closed herself off in her rooms, and wouldn't allow anyone to see her.

Today, Wei Luo was currently in the greenhouse watering the roses and saw Bai Lan hurriedly walking over.

“Miss, a really bad thing happened!”

Wei Luo put down the watering can she was holding. She turned around to look at her, “What happened to make you so hasty and impatient?”

Bai Lan composed herself and organized the words she wanted to say, “Master and fifth young master had a dispute. In his anger, Master punished young master to kneel in the ancestral hall.”

Wei Luo paused in her movements. She almost couldn't believe her. How could Chang Hong have an argument with daddy? What happened? She furrowed her eyebrows and started walking in the direction of the ancestral hall. As she walked, she asked Bai Lan, “What happened exactly? Tell me in detail.”

Bai Lan wasn't sure either. She had heard this from another

servant girl. It seemed that master wanted to arrange a marriage for young master, but young master wouldn't agree with it. The two of them couldn't come to an agreement and master eventually lost his temper during their talk.

As Wei Luo listened to this, her eyes sunk. Arranged marriage? In her previous life, Chang Hong had only been married to one person. Could it be that father had settled Chang Hong's engagement with Li Xiang at this time?

Her eyebrows deepened. She quickened her steps as she rushed to the ancestral hall.

The ancestral hall was in the back of Pine Courtyard. When she arrived there, Wei Kun was already gone and there was only Chang Hong kneeling on the praying mat in front of Wei family's ancestor's memorial tablets. Chang Hong's head was slightly hanging down, but his back was very straight and showed an unyielding wish to continue kneeling rather than assent.

She walked forward and patted Chang Hong's shoulder, "What did daddy say to you?"

Chang Hong looked. Seeing that it was her, something flickered in his eyes, "He didn't say anything."

Wei Luo was actually able to laugh at his words. Her lips curved up as she said, "Don't lie to me. If he didn't say anything, why would he punish you with kneeling? I already heard everything from Bai Lan. He wanted to arrange a marriage for you?"

Chang Hong didn't open his mouth to admit or deny.

She continued asking, "Who is the other person? Why didn't you agree?"

After a while, Chang Hong finally said, "Prince Ru Yang's daughter, Li Xiang."

When Wei Kun came home today, before he had time to change clothes, he had called him to the main room to ask him about his

impression of Prince Ru Yang's daughter, Li Xiang. He rarely saw her, so naturally he didn't have much of an impression of her. Who would have expected that Wei Kun's next words would be that Prince Ru Yang wanted to become relatives with Duke Ying by marriage? In their residence, Chang Hong's age was the most suitable with Li Xiang's, so he wanted to arrange a marriage between the two.

Chang Hong refused without even thinking about it. Li Xiang was Li Song's younger sister. Li Song had pushed him into the lake when they were children and he had bullied Ah Luo by inappropriately touching her when they were outside on Spring Lantern Festival. Thus, he didn't have a good impression of any member of House Li.

However, Wei Kun said that he wasn't considering the current situation and that he was being too willful. He wouldn't agree no matter what Wei Kun said. In the end, Wei Kun couldn't do anything about his refusal and had him kneel at the ancestral hall to carefully think this over.

What was there to think about? Even if he thought about this for three days and three nights, he wouldn't agree.

Hearing that it was indeed Li Xiang, Wei Luo was slightly astonished. So, they had set their engagement so early? She very much approved of Chang Hong's actions. Li Xiang wasn't a good thing. In her previous life, it was because of this engagement with her that she and Li Song had destroyed Chang Hong. Naturally, in this lifetime, she wouldn't let Chang Hong jump into this living hell. There wasn't anyone good in House Li. She didn't care who married Li Xiang, but Chang Hong definitely couldn't agree.

She thought about this and then said, "First, stop kneeling. I'll go talk to daddy and persuade him to give up on this idea."

Chang Hong slowly nodded.

Wei Luo left the ancestral hall and asked the servants to check

Wei Kun's location. The servant said he was in the study, so she quickly walked there.

When she arrived at the study's doorway, she pushed the door open and saw Wei Kun in front of a black table inlaid with golden spirals and engraved with clouds. He was holding a painting of a woman in front of him. His eyes were sentimental. He was so enthralled with looking at the woman that he didn't even notice her entering the room.

## Chapter 49.1

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The woman was standing underneath a plum tree in the painting. Her calm and beautiful figure was wearing a crimson cloak with golden embroidery and a peony pattern. The white snow was boundless behind her. She was standing on her tiptoes to gently smell the plum flowers and only the side of her beautiful smiling face was shown. That face was very similar to Wei Luo's. The nose and mouth shapes were more or less the same. The only difference was that she was gentle and refined and Wei Luo was lively and deviously intelligent.

Wei Luo realized who this woman was in a split second. And it was exactly because of this that she became angry.

He readily arranged an engagement for Chang Hong and punished Chang Hong with kneeling in the ancestral hall just because Chang Hong didn't agree, while he was here fondly reflecting past memories and looking at Jiang Miao Lan's portrait. What was his meaning? It couldn't be that Chang Hong's marriage was Jiang Miao Lan's last wish?

Wei Kun became aware of her presence. After his moment of surprise, he didn't forget to roll up the painting so that she couldn't look at it. "Ah Luo, why did you come here? Why didn't you say anything when you came inside?"

Unfortunately, she had already seen everything that she should.

Wei Luo stayed a few steps away from him. She pursed her lips and stared at him. After a while, she finally said, "I heard that daddy wanted to arrange an engagement for Chang Hong and that the other person is Prince Ru Yang's daughter, Li Xiang?"

Wei Kun tied up the painting with red silk and settled himself before saying, "Exactly. After I have carefully deliberated that since House Li's Miss and Chang Hong's age are similar and our families are well matched in social status, I wanted to arrange the

engagement now. It won't be too late for them to marry in another two years.

Wei Luo didn't say anything.

He added, "Did Chang Hong say this to you? That's perfect. Help me persuade him to not be so persistent in his own views..."

"Daddy!" Wei Luo interrupted his words with a rarely heard harsh voice. "Did you forget that time when Li Song pushed Chang Hong into the lake? From that time onwards, Duke Ying's family had enmity towards Prince Ru Yang's family. Do you think that if Chang Hong marries Li Xiang, the two families will shake hands and dispel their former hostility?"

Wei Kun had been choked off by her words. He wanted to refute, but he also had difficulty to accept pain from being punctured in his heart.

The reason that Prince Ru Yang suggested this engagement was indeed this reason. During the past several years, Duke Ying's family had supported and served Prince Jing. Zhao Jie had also gained a lot of prestige in the imperial court. It wouldn't be much longer until Emperor Chong Zhen abdicated. When this happened, the country would be Zhao Jie's. Prince Ru Yang had already seen that this wouldn't be good for him and wanted to find an escape route for himself. He wanted to marry his daughter in Duke Ying's family so that at least he could preserve his daughter's life and possibly save himself.

As for why Wei Kun agreed, he owed Elder Princess Gao Yang\* a debt of gratitude.

\* (T/N: She's Prince Ru Yang's wife, Li Song and Li Xiang's mother, and the emperor's sister.)

Elder Princess Gao Yang had read his essays, greatly admired his literary talent, and had wanted to be friends with him. At that time, he already had feelings of love towards Jiang Miao Lan, so he

had tactfully declined the princess's patronage. Later on, when he wanted to marry Jiang Miao Lan and Duke Ying and his wife wouldn't agree, Elder Princess Gao Yang had come forward to persuade his parents and this was why they relented.

If he had Chang Hong marrying Li Xiang now, it would be considered returning her kind favor.

He said with a straight face, "What nonsense. How could you speak to your daddy like this? Would daddy harm Chang Hong? What's so wrong with House Li's Miss that both of you are in a rush to reject her?"

Naturally, Wei Luo couldn't mention the things that had happened in her previous life. She clenched her fist and slowly said, "Li Xiang's older brother acted improperly towards me during Spring Lantern Festival. As a daughter of a family that brings up their children with that type of moral conduct, Li Xiang would naturally not be very good either."

Wei Kun's face changed and he immediately slapped the table. He loved his daughter dearly after all. "Is this really true?"

Wei Luo expressionlessly nodded.

To stop Chang Hong's engagement, why wouldn't she use Li Song as an excuse? Besides, her words weren't completely false. Although there were many people that day, it wouldn't have been impossible for him to avoid touching her. Instead, he didn't move the slightest bit and closely stuck to her. It was clearly intentional. Also, she wasn't afraid of damaging her reputation. Wei Kun loved her dearly and wouldn't mention this to anyone else. As long as he gave up on his idea of becoming a family through marriage with House Li, it wasn't a big deal to let him misunderstand.

As expected, Wei Kun stood up from his rosewood chair with a serious expression and seemed as if he was contemplating.

Wei Luo thought about it and then she said, "Chang Hong hasn't

even seen Li Xiang's face. It would be too careless and hasty to arrange their engagement this way. There'll be a hunting ceremony soon. Fifth prince had invited Chang Hong to go with him and Li Xiang will probably go there with Li Song. It wouldn't be too late to decide after they meet each other and see if they get along with each other first."

As she said the following words, her eyes showed sorrow, "Why is daddy in a rush over this? I'm the same age as Chang Hong. If you're in a rush to arrange his marriage, are you also planning on marrying me out soon too? What have we done to make you dissatisfied with us?"

A daughter wasn't the same as a son. A daughter should be pampered and spoiled. Wei Kun had always loved Wei Luo more dearly than Chang Hong. Seeing her feeling hurt, he immediately mollified his expression, "When have I ever said such a thing? Even if I arrange an engagement for Wei Chang Hong now, a few years still have to pass before they marry..." As he said this, he sighed.

He somewhat helplessly continued, "Fine, we'll do what you said. I'll make the final decision after the hunting ceremony. At that time, you two will have to tell me what's wrong with Li Xiang in detail."

Wei Luo responded in agreement. Before she left, she secretly glanced at the painting near his hand. Her eyes flashed with preoccupation of her thoughts. Soon after, she turned around and left the study.

The edges of that painting had already turned yellow and were breaking down. Did he often take it out to look at it? That woman had abandoned him a long time ago. Why did he still keep that painting?

Wei Luo went to the ancestral hall after she left the study.

She told Chang Hong what had happened. Chang Hong could



only nod and agree to go to the hunting ceremony.

Wei Luo reassured him, “You only need behave like your normal self. Don’t pay attention to Li Xiang no matter what she does.”

As for Li Xiang, she had too many weak points that Wei Luo could use against her. In her previous life, it was only because she wasn’t at Duke Ying’s residence and couldn’t do anything to Li Xiang. In this lifetime, Wei Luo only needed to use a little bit of energy to expose Li Xiang’s true nature in front of everyone. At that time, she wouldn’t even need to say anything and Wei Kun would refuse this arranged marriage.

And so, she still had to go to hunting ceremony even though she didn’t want to attend.

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There were still four or five more days until the hunting ceremony.

Early in the morning, Wei Luo was sitting on the couch in the southern side of the room and reading “Fan Yan Yi Shu” while absent-mindedly think about what had happened yesterday.

(T/N: “Fan Yan Yi Shu” is a very arduous philosophical book.)

A servant girl came inside and said, “Miss, someone from the place has invited you.”

Wei Luo put down her book and looked at her, “Who is it?”

The servant girl fidgeted her hands and uneasily said, “It seems that its Princess Tianji’s servant.”

She was very surprised. Was Zhao Liuli looking for her because she had an urgent matter? But, why didn’t she mention this in advance? She thought that Liuli had invited her to enter the palace, so she changed into a cherry blossom colored outfit that was embroidered with peony flower pattern and walked outside.

When she arrived at the entrance to Duke Ying’s residence, there

was indeed a carriage with a domed umbrella-like roof and eight treasures design.

In front of the carriage, there were two mamas dressed in simple clothing. There usually wasn't such a grand gesture when she went to the palace. She couldn't avoid feeling more alert and sensitive. She stepped on the pedal to enter the carriage.

Just as she held the golden embroidered curtain open, she heard an excited voice from inside, "Ah Luo, come inside quickly."

(T/N: In all fairness, parents decided marriage in ancient times. But, I still feel so satisfied when Ah Luo silently calls out Wei Kun's hypocritical actions. How does he not see how hypocritical his actions are in forcing his son to marry someone he doesn't like when the very favor he's trying to return is that he got to marry the person he liked?)

## Chapter 49.2

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Zhao Liuli was sitting inside the carriage. She had replaced her luxurious clothing with the clothing that a girl from an ordinary family would wear and had her hair in a simple bun. She was wearing a white silk jacket, a yellow goose skirt, and an ink-colored cloak. Although her clothes were simple, the aura around her was the same.

Still surprised, Wei Luo sat down next to her. She incredulously asked, “Why are you here? Did the empress allow you to leave the palace?”

She happily nodded as if she were a canary that had just been let out of her cage, “Big brother saw that I was bored of being shut inside the palace every day and felt that I was too pitiful, so he pleaded with imperial mother for me and also said that he would order guards to protect me the entire way. Imperial mother finally reluctantly agreed.”

She was in high spirits and raised a finger as she said, “I can only leave the palace for one day. I heard that “Male Phoenix Seeking Female Phoenix” was being performed outside the palace. Let go there together to listen okay?”

This was the first time she left the palace. It would be a novel experience no matter what she saw. She didn’t know what was outside; much less what was the new thing to do. She often listened to musicals inside the palace, so she wanted to see the differences between musicals that were held inside and outside the palace. This was why she wanted to go with Wei Luo to listen to the musical.

Wei Luo nodded her head to show her agreement.

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The carriage traveled through the capital. After it passed several

streets, it finally stopped at Rong Chun Fang's entrance.

Rong Chun Fang was a place dedicated to listening to musicals. The first floor was the lobby and had several dozen chairs for the audience. The second floor consisted of private rooms used by high officials and the nobility. While listening to the musicals, they would be able to order pots of fragrant tea and a few plates of snacks. The second floor was also more peaceful and stylish than the first floor.

Zhao Liuli seemed as if she had reserved the room in advance. She followed the mama up the stairs to an elegant room, pushed open the sliding door, and smilingly said, "Older brother, we're here."

Wei Luo had followed behind her. She froze for a moment when she heard Liuli's words and discovered there was already a person sitting in the private room.

Zhao Jie was sitting behind a small red sandalwood table carved with clouds. He was wearing a dark black robe with stylized lotuses pattern. He had been calmly pouring tea into white glazed teacups decorated with azaleas. Hearing Liuli's words, he put down the porcelain teapot and looked up to see Wei Luo in the back. His lips curled up and he said, "Sit down."

Wei Luo sat down near Zhao Liuli. When Zhao Liuli had said she wanted to come here to listen to "Male Phoenix Seeking Female Phoenix", she thought it would only be the two of them. She didn't expect that Zhao Jie would also be here.

Why didn't Liuli mention that Zhao Jie would be here?

While she was looking down, a teacup suddenly appeared before her. Zhao Jie had pushed the white glazed teacup in front of her. He propped up his chin and said, "Liuli wanted to leave the palace. Imperial mother would only agree if this prince personally accompanied Liuli. And Liuli couldn't bear to come here without you. So halfway here, she changed directions to go to Duke Ying's

residence to invite you to come here. This prince came here to wait first.”

His explanation was reasonable. Wei Luo felt relieved. She looked up with a smile and said, “Since Liuli invited me, how could I not come? Thank you older brother Prince Jing for the tea.”

Zhao Jie curved his lips and didn’t continue the conversation.

The music soon started on the stage. The heavy curtains were opened and “Male Phoenix Seeking Female Phoenix” started. Zhao Liuli held both of her cheeks and steadily stared at the actors on the stage with keen interest. Everyone was listening to the musical, but Wei Luo was lost in her thoughts and looking down. First, she didn’t really like listening to musicals. Second, she was thinking about Chang Hong’s marriage. The hunting ceremony would begin soon. How could she have Chang Hong reject this marriage in a logical manner?

She didn’t listen to what was being sung on the stage. Her pink lips were pursed. She lowered her head to drink a sip of tea. The light taste of the tea caused people to feel carefree and relaxed when they drank it. As she continued drinking, she continued thinking.

Zhao Jie stared at her. There seemed to be something wrong with her today. He didn’t know what she was thinking about. He couldn’t tell even after looking at her for a while.

What was she thinking about? Or, whom was she thinking about?

A touch of darkness flashed through Zhao Jie’s eyes and quickly disappeared unseen.

Zhao Liuli still wished to continue after the play finished. She and Wei Luo walked out of Rong Chun Fang’s entrance together. Seeing that a stall ahead of them was selling fried sweet rice dumplings, her eyes immediately brightened. Since the time that

Wei Luo mentioned this item, she had been constantly thinking about it. She hadn't expected that there would be people selling this snack after Spring Lantern Festival. She hopefully looked at Zhao Jie, who was behind then, and pointed to the front, "Older brother, I want to eat that..."

Zhao Jie looked in that direction and quietly said, "You can go. Have Yang Zhen go with you."

She happily nodded. She pulled Yang Zhen, who was at their side, to walk over there.

Wei Luo stood in place and waited for them.

Zhao Jie stared at her and slowly called out, "Ah Luo."

She tilted her head to look at him.

Zhao Jie's dark eyes were calm and gentle. As he was about to open his mouth, he heard a person call him, "Older cousin Jing?"

He looked back and saw that Gao Dan Yang was only a few steps away. She was wearing a green crepe jacket and a white silk skirt. She had also come here to listen to musicals with her younger sister, Gao Qing Yang. She saw Zhao Jie's back, but she wasn't sure if it was him, so she had called out. After Zhao Jie had turned around, her bright eyes had curved in a smile.

Her delicate and pretty face showed a surprised smile, "It's really you. I didn't expect that older cousin Jing would also come here to listen to musicals. I heard from father that you had returned from Binzhou, but I didn't have any opportunities to meet you since your return." After she said this, she paused and looked behind him, "Whom did you come here with? I seemed to have seen Liuli a few moments ago. Where did she go?"

Zhao Jie's eyebrows furrowed. He followed her gaze and looked behind himself.

There wasn't anyone behind him. Wei Luo had already disappeared.

# Chapter 50

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The stall selling fried sweet rice dumplings wasn't far away. While Yang Zhen was paying for the bag of snacks, Zhao Liuli was impatiently using a bamboo skewer to deliver the snack into her mouth. Yang Zhen immediately stopped her action. He took the bamboo skewer from her and blew on it to cool it off before handing it back to her. The habitually silent young man's features were grave and stern, but he was very gentle as he fed Zhao Liuli. He watched Liuli eat a mouthful of the snack and her subsequent satisfied expression. The corners of his mouth couldn't help curving up slightly.

In addition to the fried sweet rice dumplings, there were many other snacks being sold on the street. Zhao Lilui couldn't tear herself away to go back. She dragged Yang Zhen along to look at this and that place. In the end, she stopped in front of a snack vendor that was selling rose mirror pastry. There was a gluttonous expression on her face.

Mirror pastry was a round, sticky, and white pastry made by steaming glutinous rice flour and sprinkling toppings like sesame, peanuts, rose petals, and/or jam on top. It was also decorated with a ripe cherry at the center. It looked good and tasted good. Zhao Liuli saw that other girls were all buying this snack. She couldn't resist pulling on Yang Zhen's sleeve and said, "Older brother Yang Zhen, I want to eat this too."

Yang Zhen took out five coins from his sleeve and purchased two pastries. One was hawthorn flavor and the other was cherry flavor. Zhao Liuli happily took both of them, but was reluctant to eat them. She looked left and right and said, "I want to give one to Ah Luo."

Yang Zhen saw that her small face had become glossy and rosy from excitement and said in low voice, "You should eat it yourself. His highness Prince Jing will buy more for fourth miss."

Soon after Yang Zhen's reminder, Zhao Liuli smiled and handed one of the skewers to Yang Zhen, "This is for you!" Her emptied hand very naturally held his big hand to lead him towards another snack vendor's stall.

Yang Zhen tall figure was slightly stiff, but he didn't take his hand away. He allowed her small soft hand that seemed boneless to keep holding his. They weaved left and right through the crowded marketplace.

On the other side, Wei Luo had disappeared in the time it would take to blink once. Zhao Jie's eyes had become cold. He looked around in every direction and didn't see any traces of Wei Luo. He called for Zhu Geng to come forward and asked, "Where's Ah Luo?"

Zhu Geng pointed in the direction that she had walked. There were many people in that direction. A moment of inattention and he had lost sight of her. "Fourth miss went in that direction. Yang Hao is following her. Don't worry prince."

When Gao Dan Yang heard him saying the two words "Ah Luo", the smile on her face immediately wavered. Ah Luo? Was it Duke Ying's family's Wei Luo?

So many years had passed since Wei Luo was a child. Did he still favor her like before? Back then, he had treated her excessively good. Calculating the time, that little girl was now thirteen years old. And Zhao Jie had taken her outside to stroll around together. What exactly did this mean?

This translation belongs to FuyuNeko. Please read from the original source, mew.

The more that Gao Dan Yang thought about this, the more she felt a sense of crisis. Zhao Jie was twenty-two years old and nine years older than Wei Luo. If he really wanted to obtain that little girl, it wasn't impossible... If that happened, what would she do? Gao Dan Yang uneasily thought. She had waited four years for him since she was sixteen years old. She had already wasted her youth



and had become an old maid. Duke Zhen had rejected countless marriage proposals for her because of Zhao Jie. She had originally thought that after he had returned from Binzhou, it would be time to discuss their marriage. She hadn't expected that he would be with Wei Luo. Where was she in his heart?

Gao Dan Yang tightly clutched the silk handkerchief in her hands. She pretended to carelessly ask Zhao Jie, "So, older cousin Jing is out with Duke Ying's family's fourth miss? Could it be that I saw fourth miss before instead of Liuli?"

Zhao Jie finally looked at her, but he didn't answer her. Instead he asked, "Don't you have other things to do?"

Gao Dan Yang was blocked from asking further. She embarrassedly said, "I..." She pointed towards the cosmetic store in front of them, "I'm going to visit that store with Qing Yang."

Gao Qing Yang was also thirteen years old this year. The young girl looked sweet and charming. She didn't have any interest towards her older sister and Zhao Jie's emotional drama. She was currently fiddling with the nearby vendors' stalls' bottles and jars.

Zhao Jie slightly waved his hand. He didn't give her opportunity to continue talking, "Go then. I still have other things to do with Liuli. It would be inconvenient to keep talking. If there's other words you want to say, we'll talk another day."

Hearing that Zhao Liuli was also with them, Gao Dan Yang immediately relaxed. It would be fine as long as he wasn't spending time with only Wei Luo. Who didn't know that Zhao Liuli had a good relationship with Wei Luo? Since it was rare for Zhao Liuli to leave the palace, she would definitely invite Wei Luo out too. Zhao Jie was only accompanying them as a way to keep them safe. She slightly smiled. Her smiling face had relaxed, "Older cousin Jing, you're busy with your own things. You don't need to be concerned about Qing Yang and me. We'll go straight home after visiting that cosmetic store."

After she said this, she pulled Gao Qing Yang and walked past him.

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After sending away those two, Zhao Jie walked in the direction that Zhu Geng had pointed.

Zhao Liuli had Yang Zhen protecting her. He wasn't worried about anything happening to her. It would be fine as long as they went back to the palace before the sun disappeared behind the mountains. His top priority was finding Wei Luo.

He didn't know why that little girl had walked away so fast. He had only looked away for a moment before she disappeared. There were all sorts of people on both sides of the street. After he walked a distance, he finally saw her at the intersection of two streets. She was in the middle of the crowd of people. Her figure wasn't the most obvious, but he recognized her in a single glance. She was staring at a man in front of her. The man was wearing loose clothing without shoes and had disheveled hair. He was crouched down at a corner drinking wine.

Zhao Jie could tell that the man had taken five minerals powder just from looking at him.

Zhao Jie's eyes deepened. He increased his walking speed.

Wei Luo wasn't far away. Her emotions were complicated as she looked at that man. She thought about her previous life's Chang Hong. Chang Hong had also become like this in the end because of Li Song. He had spent his days in a drunken stupor and being muddleheaded. Everyone had pointed at him and ridiculed him. She definitely couldn't let Wei Chang Hong make the same mistake again. He should have a better future and marry a fair and considerate bride instead of being ruined at the hands of that pair of siblings, Li Xiang and Li Song!

She couldn't help pursing her lips, but the rest of her face didn't

change. Her turbulent feelings were hidden.

She was about to turn around and leave, but a carriage to the front of her suddenly lost control. It was swerving around recklessly and heading towards her. The panicking driver shouted for the people on the streets to get out of the way. The carriage knocked over a nearby stall that was selling pastries made of peas. One after another, everyone retreated. She wanted to move to the side, but that carriage's horse loudly neighed and was rushing directly towards her!

She opened her eyes wider in surprise. She didn't have time to move before a figure appeared in front of her, leaned over, wrapped his hand around her waist, and safely moved her to the corner of a wall.

The man's embrace was warm and his arm was powerful. He was tightly holding her entire body close to himself. She blinked. He was using too much strength to hold her and she couldn't move at all. She could only turn her eyes to look at him and asked, "Big brother?"

Zhao Jie's hand was on her waist. He rested his chin on her head without saying anything.

This translation belongs to FuyuNeko. Please read from the original source, mew.

The carriage's out-of-control horse had been subdued by Zhu Geng and was obediently stopped behind them. The driver was repeatedly expressing his thank to Zhu Geng. Zhu Geng waved his hand and said it wasn't necessary. His gaze fell on the two embracing people in the corner.

Quite a while later, Zhao Jie slowly loosen his hold on her. He was still leaning over and was very close to her forehead when he asked, "Why did you leave without saying anything. Just a moment ago, it was so dangerous. If I didn't appear, you would have been injured."

The emotion in his eyes was too direct. She retreated without thinking. Unfortunately, a wall was behind her. She couldn't move back. She could only face his anger. "If big brother didn't come, I could have gotten out of the way by myself..."

When the carriage was rushing towards her, she had originally wanted to evade it by moving to the side. But, because he had rushed over and tightly hugged her, she hadn't been able to move.

Was she blaming him for not minding his own business?

Zhao Jie watched her little face closely. When he looked at her face so closely, it made him feel even more infatuated. Her thick and long eyelashes gently fluttered and touched his nose as if it were a tiny invisible hand. It constantly teased his heart that had been as dry as an ancient well.

As he looked at her, his heart softened for no apparent reason. He straightened up. His line of sight fell on her bright red lips. His eyes gradually darkened. He wanted to know what she would taste like if he bit her lips. He couldn't keep looking. If he kept looking, he would be poisoned into addiction like that man who took five minerals powder and would be unable to separate from her for even a moment.

He looked away from her, "What were you looking at before?"

Wei Luo burrowed out of his embrace and looked at that nearby man again. "The weather hasn't warmed up yet. Why is he barefoot? Big brother, isn't he cold?"

Zhao Jie didn't follow her line of sight. Instead, he raised his hand to rub away the dust on her little face. "He's been poisoned by five minerals powder and needs to bare his feet to cool down."

Wei Luo looked up at him, "What's five minerals powder?"

Five minerals powder was ... when a man didn't have enough strength, using this would temporarily increase his physical strength and satisfy the needs of his body. It would also cause

hallucinations. Although this drug could bring a person temporary happiness, it was poisonous. If it were used for a long period of time, a person would become addicted. In the end, the soul would leave the withered body and living would be worse than dying.

Of course, Zhao Jie wouldn't tell her these things. He rubbed her cheeks and said, "It's a type of poisonous drug."

In a voice that seemed to only have a hazy notion of understanding, Wei Luo said, "Oh." She suddenly thought of something else. She looked behind him, "Weren't you with older sister Gao? Why did she leave?"

Zhao Jie didn't want to continue this topic, so he simply said, "She had other things to do, so she left first."

Wei Luo didn't continue asking.

The two of them went back together and planned to meet back up with Liuli.

Not long after, a person came out from behind a doorway and stood there. Gao Dan Yang's heart felt as if bottles of many flavors (emotions) had fallen over. She couldn't put into words what she was feeling. By chance, she had seen the moment when Zhao Jie hugged Wei Luo. He had hugged that little girl so closely with an anxious expression in his eyes as if he was holding a treasure.

When had Zhao Jie ever been this nervous about someone else?

If you said there was nothing between those two, who would believe you?

The author has something to say:

Zhao Jie: En, I don't believe it either.

# Chapter 51.1

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By the sixth day of the month, the snow and ice had melted and disappeared on Zhang Xun Mountain. Spring had arrived and everything was coming back to life. It was a good time to go hunting.

Jing He Villa was constructed at the top of Zhang Xun Mountain. At the foot of the mountain, there was a road that led directly to front of the villa. At this time, there were carriages after carriages parked on this road. Starting from early morning, the guests had been arriving one after another to the villa. The villa's steward was at the entrance to personally welcome the guests and orderly and properly arranged accommodations for them.

The area covered by Jing He Villa was expansive. The primary part of the villa was separated into two courtyards. The Rong Courtyard was for men and the Min Courtyard was for women.

Min Courtyard was divided into several smaller courtyards. Each courtyard had three open-space areas. The steward had analyzed everything thoroughly and arranged for five women to be staying in each smaller courtyard. These women were each assigned two servants girls to be at their side to serve them. When Wei Luo and Wei Zheng arrived, the steward assigned them to the inside of Xi Yan Courtyard. At this time, that courtyard already had three young women staying there. They were Liang Yu Rong, Song Hui's sister, Song Ru Wei, and Li Xiang.

Wei Luo moved into the eastern courtyard and couldn't help thinking that this arrangement really complied with the saying that enemies and lovers were destined to meet.

The rooms inside the courtyard were bright and clean. The furniture had already been wiped free of dust. It wasn't necessary for the servant girls to do any further cleaning. Wei Luo sat on a kaiguang stool that was decorated with stylized blue flowers and

had Jin Lu investigate which room Li Xi was staying in.

Soon, Jin Lu returned to room and answered, "Miss, Prince Ru Yang's daughter is staying in the Western room."

Wei Luo nodded. After she thought about it, she said, "Pay attention to the situation over there. To avoid being found out, don't be too obvious. If she does anything suspicious, tell me immediately."

Jin Lu nodded in agreement. Although she didn't know what Miss was planning, since Miss had ordered her, she would do her best.

The hunting competition would officially begin early tomorrow morning. The young men had only come here in advance to get used to the environment, scout out the terrain in the mountain, and make a few marks for the trails in order to avoid getting lost. They didn't want to get lost tomorrow when the competition officially started and become laughing stocks.

Wei Luo hadn't sat down for a long time before Liang Yu Rong visited her.

Liang Yu Rong had come here with her older brother Liang Yu. Liang Yu was eighteen years old this year and had excellent martial arts skills. His physique was strong and muscular from studying martial arts for many years. He had been preparing for this year's hunting competition for a long time. To be exceptional and stand out in this year's competition, he had broken countless targets in home from practicing

Liang Yu Rong poured herself a cup of tea. Holding the colorful lid and cup in her hands, she said, "Mother and I often say that since he's so obsessed with martial arts, it would be better for him take the imperial exam and be the military champion."

(T/N: The military champion is the person who scores the best in the imperial military examination.)

Wei Luo paused and looked at Liang Yu Rong.

Liang Yu Rong didn't notice and continued saying, "My older brother also has this intention. He said that if he can't win first place this time in the hunting competition, he will obediently take the imperial military examination."

Wei Luo tightened the hold she had on her teacup. With Liang Yu's abilities, as long as he properly prepares, he shouldn't have a problem with becoming the military champion...

In her previous life, Li Xiang had greatly admired the military champion. Back then, Wei Luo didn't see the military champion's face or wasn't mindful about learning his name. Could it have been Liang Yu? Wei Luo tried to remember if she had heard anything about the military champion back then. But, she really couldn't remember. In the end, she couldn't be absolutely sure that Liang Yu was the person that Li Xiang liked.

But, Liang Yu really suited Li Xiang's esthetics. He was a tall, handsome warrior with broad shoulders.

Could Li Xiang have already liked him by the time of this hunting ceremony?

Wei Luo supported her chin with her hand. She slowly turned and twisted the teacup's small lid that had been on the table and didn't pay attention to Liang Yu Rong's other words.

After Liang Yu Rong had stayed in the eastern courtyard for an hour, she saw that it wasn't early anymore, and stood up to leave.

Wei Luo walked her to the eastern courtyard's entrance to send her off. They coincidentally met Li Song and Li Xiang in the central courtyard. Li Song had come by to talk with Li Xiang and was walking around in the central courtyard. They didn't know /that Wei Luo was living in the eastern courtyard and as they strolled around, they somehow walked to the eastern courtyard's entrance and ended up face to face with Wei Luo and Li Yu Rong.



Li Song suddenly stopped. Seeing Wei Luo, the expression on his face was slightly strange at first. Very quickly, his face became cold. "Why are you staying here?"

Who would have expected that Wei Luo wouldn't pay any attention to him? After she sent off Liang Yu Rong, she didn't even look at them once before turning around and raising her eight treasure pattern brocade skirt as she walked back into her room.

The eastern courtyard's wooden doors were closed in Li Song's face. His face turned ugly. It first changed from green and then to white.

He had just spoken to her. It couldn't be that she didn't hear him, right? He and Li Xiang were standing right here. She would go so far as to not even say a single word of greeting. Her arrogance was too much! She considered everyone else beneath her!

He stood in front of her doors for a long time. He felt both angry and a little bit powerless in his heart. After he had returned home from the Spring Lantern Festival, he had thought about her for many days. He couldn't but think about her appearance. He clearly hated her. He hated her to the point that he wanted to bully her every day and see her weak appearance as she cried. He impatiently wanted to see her again even though they would probably mutually taunt each other if they met. Who could have expected that when they met today, she wouldn't even acknowledge him? This damaged his self-esteem and he didn't come back to his senses for a long time.

Li Xiang pulled his arm and indignantly said, "Older brother, let's ignore her. Who does she think she is? She's so arrogant. Does she think she's that amazing because she has a princess as a friend? Humph."

After saying this, she left with Li Song and they gradually walked away.

## Chapter 51.2

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Inside the eastern courtyard, Wei Luo had Jin Lu and Bai Lan carry a short couch to underneath a tung tree that was in the garden. She lied down on the couch and closed her eyes to rest for a bit.

She had deliberately ignored Li Song. Chang Hong's engagement wasn't resolved and she didn't want to look at those two. In addition, Li Song had been rude to her last time, so she didn't have to show a pleasant expression in front of him. She was already being courteous enough by not rolling her eyes at him.

Wei Luo slept for almost an hour. When she woke up, a flower petal from the tung tree had fallen on her nose. It felt itchy. As she was lifting her hand to get rid of the flower petal, another hand was quicker than hers and had picked it up instead. That other hand was pale and slender and it was followed by a smile and a gentle voice that said, "Did younger sister Ah Luo wake up?"

For a moment, Wei Luo blinked and couldn't tell what evening it was. After a while, she remembered she was at Jing He Villa. She looked around and only saw Song Hui standing by her. He was wearing a light green robe with a lotus pattern. Several tung flower petals had fallen on his shoulders. She didn't know how long he had been standing there.

Wei Luo sat up and with a sleepy voice she asked in surprise, "Why did older brother Song Hui also come here? Weren't you at home studying?"

She had slept underneath the tree for a while. Many flower petals had fallen on her head and body. When she sat up, they all fell down on the couch. The young girl's cheeks were slightly red and her large eyes were wide open. She seemed like a completely different person from her peaceful sleeping self.

He hadn't been here for a long time. Jin Lu said she was resting,

so he thought about sitting next to her while waiting. Unexpectedly, as soon as he came closer, she woke up and opened her eyes.

Song Hui smiled and explained, "It's too boring to always stay at home to study. So, I took this opportunity to come to the mountain to relax. Although I can't win one of the top three spots, I can still hunt a rabbit for you."

Although he was a scholar, he had taken lesson on riding and archery and his skills were fairly good. It was only that during these past few years, he hadn't been practicing much, so his skills had deteriorated. Tomorrow, he didn't know if his hands would be able to do what his mind wanted like before.

Wei Luo pursed her lips. She slightly smiled, "Older brother Song Hui forgot. I'm allergic to small furry animals. It would be okay if you want to give me rabbit meat to eat, but I won't be able to raise it."

Song Hui remembered this matter after she reminded him. When Wei Luo was two or three years old, she really liked kittens and puppies. Unfortunately, whenever she touched these types of animals, her body would have rashes that wouldn't go away for several days. After the doctor figured out the reason, Wei Kun forbid her from having any contact with furry animals. There was one time when Wei Chang Xian brought back a filthy ba er dog from outside. Wei Luo really liked it. She concealed the dog from Wei Kun, washed the dog clean, and slept for a night while holding the ba er dog. The next morning, her entire body was covered in rashes. She could barely breathe and almost died. Wei Kun was scared out of his mind. Fourth master also heavily punished Wei Chang Xian.

Since then, Wei Luo was more obedient. She never touched small fluffy animals again.

Song Hui's face was ashamed. He indulgently said, "You can do

whatever you want with the rabbit."

Wei Luo said, "Okay, then I'll wait for older brother Song Hui to hunt a rabbit to give to me."

On this side, there was a harmonious and comfortable atmosphere around these two people. But, they didn't notice that a person had come through the courtyard's entrance.

Since the imperial family originally built Jing He Villa, Zhao Jie freely moved about the villa and naturally, no one would dare to stop him.

He stood at the eastern courtyard's entrance and watched the two people that were underneath the tong tree.

The young girl's face was pink from smiling and her two dimples could be seen. She was looking up at the man in front of her. White flower petals floated down from the tree and one coincidentally fell onto her eyelashes. Song Hui helped her pick off the flower petal with a gentle expression in his eyes.

## Chapter 52.1

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Jin Lu was carrying a red sandalwood food box that was carved with begonia flowers. The food box contained cherries that Jing He Villa had sent to every courtyard. These fresh and plump cherries were grown in the villa and had just been picked from the trees. There were still dewdrops on top of the cherries from last night.

As Jin Lu was walking towards the eastern courtyard, she thought about what yummy food she should make for miss. Cherries and milk with or without sugar would be good. Since miss liked to eat sweet things, it would probably be best to add more sugar...

As she passed through the courtyard's entrance and was about to go to the kitchen, she almost hit someone's back! Fortunately, her reflexes were quick and she promptly stopped her next step. She patted her chest and then looked up to see who that person was.

The person was wearing an indigo brocade robe that was horizontally weaved with a river pattern, ink-colored boots with golden embroidery, and a jade belt. He had a peerless elegance that couldn't be compared.

Jin Lu gulped. She thought that it was fortunate that she managed to not bump into this person, "Your Highness Prince Jing..."

However, the person in front of her didn't respond with word or movement. His eyebrows were bleak as he watched the two people below the tong tree. Jin Lu followed his line of sight and only saw that Wei Luo and Song Hui hadn't noticed that other people had come to courtyard. They were probably talking about entertaining anecdotes from their childhood. Wei Luo was softly smiling and her two dimples were revealed. Song Hui was standing next to her with his hands behind his back. His eyes showed his desire to

pamper her. Standing side by side, this golden couple was truly a match made in a heaven

Jin Lu thought this sight was very harmonious and didn't think there was anything strange. Why was his highness Prince Jing emitting a heavy and gloomy aura?

While Jin Lu was worrying about this, Wei Luo had turned around and finally noticed Zhao Jie's presence. She called out with a smile, "Older brother Prince Jing!"

Zhao Jie finally unfroze. He put away his vicious aura and smiled as he walked towards Wei Luo and Song Hui.

Wei Luo looked at Jin Lu who was walking away while carrying the food box, then she looked at him. She tilted her head and asked, "When did older brother Prince Jing arrive? Why didn't you say anything? Have you been standing there for a long time?"

Zhao Jie's gaze landed on Song Hui while he lightly said. "Not long, I just arrived." As he continued speaking, without any reason, he looked at Song Hui's hand that had helped pick off the flower petals from Wei Luo. He curved his lips and said words that had a far-reaching implication, "I came here to see if you were comfortable staying here. Who would have expected that Sir Song Hui would be even more considerate than this prince by coming here earlier?"

Song Hui took a step back and bowed to salute, "Greetings your highness Prince Jing." After saying this he stood up and went back to Zhao Jie's line of sight. He could clearly feel Zhao Jie's hostility towards him.

Although Song Hui spent most of his time at home studying, he was still aware of things that happened outside his home. At this time, he couldn't help but think about certain rumors. The rumors said that Prince Jing favored and spoiled House Ying's fourth miss without limits and often gave her gifts. Outsiders all thought that this was because of Princess Tianji. Wei Luo had a very good

relationship with Princess Tianji and their ages were similar, so Zhao Jie probably thought of her as a younger sister and that was why he spoiled her. Song Hui also thought this was the reason originally, but from what he saw today, this didn't seem entirely true.

Men understood other men's way of thinking the best. Perhaps, Zhao Jie's feelings toward Ah Luo weren't as simple as what outsiders thought.

Song Hui smiled. His words were neither servile nor overbearing, "Ah Luo is delicate and this is also her first time staying overnight on a mountain. I was worried that she wouldn't be used to staying here. It's only natural that I should come here to check up on her." He paused and then continued, "Besides, Ah Luo has been close to me since she was a child. Since she won't be at uncle's side these two days, as her older cousin, I should naturally be more attentive towards her."

Zhao Jie looked at him without saying any words. There was clearly a smile on his lips, but his eyes were cold and held a swift and violent wind.

In a short while, he nodded as if he had a sudden thought. He changed the topic by asking, "This prince heard that Sir Song will also participate in the hunting. It's unexpected that scholarly Sir Song also knows horse riding and archery. How is your archery skill? Would you be willing to compete with this prince tomorrow?"

Hunting had always been a way for men to compete with each other. There was no reason for him to refuse. Without the slightest fear, Song Hui confidently accepted Zhao Jie's challenge. "I'm honored that this prince thinks so highly of me. I'll definitely accompany the prince to the very end, but my archery skill isn't very good. I hope that the prince will be merciful tomorrow."

Zhao Jie moved his hands behind his back and thought-provokingly smiled, "Sir Song must be joking. It wouldn't be

logical to surrender a prey that you fancy to another person in the hunting area.

Song Hui was blocked. He didn't expect that Zhao Jie would be so frank. He didn't have any words to say in response for a long time.

It went without saying whom he was referring to as prey. These two men were well aware and neither of them was willing to back down. After all, they had watched her grow from a young girl to a slender, elegant, and charming young woman. No one would be willing to give her up to another person.

However, this highly desired prey didn't see the hidden emotional turbulence between these two men. She thought they were only talking about tomorrow's hunting. As she ate the cherries covered in sweetened milk, she said, "Older brother Song Hui hasn't used a bow in a long time. Are you sure that you'll be okay?"

Hearing her being concerned about him, the melancholy in Song Hui's heart was completely swept away. He rubbed her head and said, "Ah Luo, don't worry. Older brother Song Hui won't cause you to lose face."

Wei Luo wasn't worried about being humiliated. She was only worried about whether or not he would be able to cope with tomorrow's hunting. He and Chang Hong's level of horse riding and archery skills were about the same. If he couldn't handle it, then Chang Hong probably wouldn't be able to either. In the end, she was only asking because she was worried about Chang Hong.

She sincerely said, "You have to be careful. Don't get hurt."

Song Hui enjoyed her words and smiled as he said, "Okay."

She also wanted to ask Song Hui to take care of Chang Hong, but before she could say those words, she saw that Zhao Jie was looking directly at her. The smile on his lips had become faint and his eyes were dark and gloomy for an unknown reason. Wei Luo



was startled for a moment. Could she have said something wrong? Why was his expression so ugly? After she carefully thought about it, she added these too late words, "Older brother Prince Jing, don't get hurt."

Zhao Jie's expression didn't improve. She only paid attention to him after she was done being concerned about Song Hui. Was his position actually inferior to Song Hui's?

Wei Luo didn't have the slightest idea about his current thoughts. Seeing that he didn't acknowledge or appreciate her words, she pursed her lips and lowered her head to silently eat the cherries.

Song Hui asked her if she was comfortable living here. She nodded and said she was. In addition, he asked her a few questions about her food and accommodations. She replied that everything was good. After he had asked her everything that should be asked, Song Hui didn't have a reason to stay any longer, so he said his good-bye, "Since there isn't anything else, I'll go back to my own dwelling. If you need anything, tell me and I'll send someone to do it."

She nodded and expressed her thanks, "Older brother Song Hui, you're busy with your own matters. You don't have to worry about me."

Song Hui turned around to leave. When he passed by Zhao Jie, he asked, "It's not early anymore. Is the prince not leaving?"

Zhao Jie looked at him with a fake smile, "Liuli asked this prince to pass along a message to Ah Luo. This prince will leave after speaking to her."

Song Hui didn't have any words to say in response. He said his good-bye and left.

## Chapter 52.2

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Ah Luo had already eaten half a small dish of cherries, so her lips had the sweetness of sugar. Hearing Zhao Jie's words, she curiously asked, "What did Liuli want to say to me?"

They were finally the only two people in the garden. Zhao Jie walked closer to her, took a handkerchief from his sleeve to wipe the corners of her mouth, and answered her question with another question, "Do the cherries taste good?"

Wei Luo wasn't sure she understood, so she blinked a few times before nodding and saying that the cherries tasted good.

Zhao Jie stared at her beautiful pink lips and quietly said, "This prince also wants to taste."

She thought that he wanted to eat the cherries, so she pushed the small dish towards him, "Then eat some."

The young girl had indeed grown up. When she was a child, she would innocently handfeed him candy. Now, she would only say, "Then eat some." In the end, Zhao Jie didn't eat. He stood up and said, "Ah Luo, you're an adult now. You can't let men freely enter your courtyard."

Wei Luo froze for a moment, "Liuli asked you to tell me this?"

He smiled at her with some helplessness, "What do you think?"

She was so clever. It would be impossible for her to not understand his words.

Indeed, Wei Luo understood his words. He had used Liuli as an excuse. The important point was the words that he had just said. Her eyelashes trembled. For the first time ever, she didn't agree. She refuted, "Older brother Song Hui isn't another man. We've been engaged since I was a child."

The hand that Zhao Jie had placed on the stone table tightened.

He stared into her eyes.

If she wasn't here and he wasn't worried about her reaction, perhaps, he would have flipped over the stone table in the next moment.

-----

Early next morning, the hunting competition official began.

Before dawn had arrived, the sound of bugle horns could be heard on the mountain. There was a vast momentum and ear-splitting loudness as several dozens of fine horses rushed deeper into the mountain.

Wei Luo couldn't fall back asleep after she was awoken by this noise, so she simply sat up and got out of bed to wash up. After she finished breakfast, she went to look for Liang Yu Rong. Liang Yu Rong had also woken up early and was preparing to go to the rear courtyard's Zhan Yue Building to watch the hunting. Zhan Yue Building was at the back of the Jing He Villa and had a total of five floors.

Standing at the fifth level, one could see the entire landscape of Zhang Xun Mountain. The field of view was excellent there, so it wouldn't be a problem to watch the hunting from there. Accordingly, many young women went there to watch the outstanding young men.

Liang Yu Rong pulled her along, "Let's go look. You might even be able to see your older brother Song Hui!"

Wei Luo embarrassedly smiled at her and didn't say anything.

Yesterday, Zhao Jie had left after she said those words. When he left, there wasn't the slightest trace of a smile on his face. He wasn't in a good mood. She didn't know why she had blurted out those words to him. When she had returned to her senses, it was too late.

As they walked, she suddenly remembered something. She said

to Liang Yu Rong, "Oh right, could you let me see your older brother's handwriting?"

Liang Yu Rong was quite puzzled, "My older brother's style of writing is cursive script. Why do you want to see it? Aren't you learning regular script?"

(T/N: Cursive script and regular script are two types of writing styles for Chinese calligraphy.)

Wei Luo had already thought of an excuse to say, "Recently, Teacher Xue has been teaching me how to write cursive script. I haven't been able to write it well and I didn't dare to ask the teacher for further instruction. I heard that Liang Yu is very skilled with cursive script, so I wanted to borrow something that he wrote to use as practice.

Most erudite people knew how to write in several different scripts and would teach their students these different scripts, so Wei Luo's justification was reasonable enough. Liang Yu Rong had an expression on her face that showed that this request was difficult for her, "I didn't bring anything when I came here this time. I can only give you his writing when I go back..."

Just as she finished saying this, she suddenly remembered, "My older brother had brought "Six Secret Strategic Teachings" here and he happened to have left it with me. It's marked up with his handwriting on the margins. You can take it back with you to look!" As she said this, she had a servant girl go back to her room to get the book.

(T/N: This book was one of the seven classical military books during ancient China.)

Soon, the servant girl came back with the book. Liang Yu Rong handed the book to Wei Luo, "You can take the book to look. Since he's not in a hurry to read the book, you can return the book whenever you're done with it."

Wei Luo thanked her, handed the book over to Bai Lan, and had Bai Lan bring the book back to her room.

No one cared about this small incident.

Side by side, the two young women walked to Zhan Yue Building. There were already many young women upstairs. When they looked around, there were many familiar faces. In the center of the fifth floor, there were snacks on a small lacquered table inlaid with gold and decorated with spirals.

A fine rug covered the upper floors so that it was possible to sit on the ground. They could also stand behind the railings to see how the hunting was going.

There were intense and fierce struggles in the hunting ground. The sound of the horses had startled the animals in the forest. The animals were wildly fleeing everywhere. With smooth actions, a young man had lifted up the bows in his hands, put the arrow into the bow, aimed the arrow at his chosen prey, and suddenly let go of the arrow.

The arrow left the bow. There was a whizzing sound before it successfully hit the distant prey!

Liang Yu Rong said in surprise, "My older brother is amazing!"

There was a young man not far away from the sika deer. It was indeed Liang Yu Rong's older brother, Liang Yu. The clothing that Liang Yu wore made him seem even taller and sturdier. He had been practicing martial art for many years, so his skin had darkened into a wheat color. His smile was bright and cheerful. Liang Yu had his horse walk forward, picked up his prey, and handed it over to a servant that was behind him. He clamped down on the horse, held onto the reins, and quickly disappeared into the forest. His heroic figure's departure left behind unlimited fanciful thoughts and daydreams.

Wei Luo took back her line of sight and secretly looked at Li

Xiang who was wearing an autumn colored dress.

Li Xiang didn't move her eyes away from the direction that Liang Yu had departed. She didn't even have any reaction when the young woman next to her said something. When the young woman had called her name three times, Li Xiang finally came back to her senses and asked, "What did you say?"

The young woman angrily scolded her, "Look. Look. Look. You only care about looking at him..."

Li Xiang swiftly stuffed a pea pastry into that young woman's mouth so that she couldn't continue speaking. That young woman was also someone that knew what appropriate behavior to show. She chewed the pastry, swallowed it down, didn't continue her scolding, and went back to their previous topic.

Wei Luo returned her line of sight. A smile flashed through her eyes.

It didn't matter if the military champion was or wasn't Liang Yu in her previous life. Li Xiang was already interested in Liang Yu now.

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The first day of hunting didn't end until 3-5pm.

One by one, the men came back from the forest. Every man had different successes with deer and rabbits. Since they still had to continue the competition tomorrow, the steward had prepare a banquet for tonight, so that everyone would eat and drink their fill and be able to make an all-out effort tomorrow.

The banquet would start at 5-7pm and would be held at the villa's receiving room.

Wei Luo went to see Chang Hong. She was relieved when she saw that he wasn't injured. She returned to her own courtyard, took out the book "Six Secret Strategic Teachings" that Liang Yu Rong had given her, and flipped to a page that had Liang Yu's

handwriting. She sat down on a bench, carefully looked over handwriting for a short period of time, had Jin Lu bring her a brush, and followed Liang Yu's handwriting for a model as she imitated his handwriting to write...

## Chapter 53.1

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After Wei Luo wrote down a few words, she placed the note inside an envelope and sealed the envelope with red ink paste. She called Jin Lu to her side, "Deliver this letter to a servant girl from the western courtyard, then have her give it to Li Xiang."

After Wei Luo said this, she thought about it again and repeatedly warned Jin Lu, "Actually, don't personally send the letter. Borrow one of Yu Rong's personal servant girls. Tell her that I don't have enough servants here and ask her to send the letter. After you hand the letter to Yu Rong's personal servant girl, don't do anything else. Just come back here."

She had a good relationship with Liang Yu Rong and it was only servant girl, so she was sure that Liang Yu Rong would definitely lend her one.

Even if Liang Yu Rong knew her plan, she was sure that she wouldn't do anything without first asking her why. They had a mutual understanding and affection from many years of being as close as sisters.

Jin Lu nodded her to show her agreement, turned around, and left the room.

After Li Xiang received the letter, her first reaction would be to ask which servant girl had delivered the letter. If she found out that it was Wei Luo's servant girl, she would definitely think something was wrong and wouldn't fall for her trap. However, it wouldn't be the same if Liang Yu Rong's servant girl delivered the letter. That letter was written with Liang Yu's handwriting. It wouldn't be convenient for Liang Yu to send her a letter, so it would be justifiable for him to have his younger sister's personal servant girl deliver a letter for him.

It would still be okay if this didn't fool Li Xiang. She had other methods she could try during the banquet.



A short time later, Jin Lu returned to Wei Luo's room and reassured her that she had properly finished her task.

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At western courtyard, Li Xiang was sitting on a rosewood couch and leaning against a bright red pillow that was embroidered with flowers. She took the envelope that her servant girl had brought her, opened the envelope with curiosity, and read the letter.

The writer of the letter invited her to meet him by the rear courtyard's lakeside after the banquet. Marquis Ping Yuan's heir, Liang Yu, signed the letter. She was extremely surprised. She couldn't help but think about the young man she had seen during the day. She hadn't been able to get rid of the image of his elegant and yingwu (valiant) figure from her mind.

In the letter, Liang Yu wrote that he admired her beauty. She didn't feel the slightest amount of suspicious about this part. Li Xiang had confidence in her appearance. She had inherited Elder Princess Gao Yang's beauty. Her skin was as milky as cream and her teeth were white and straight. She had received a lot of praise and approval since she was a child about her appearance. So, she wasn't surprised that Liang Yu could fall in love with her at first sight.

But, for him to send her a letter without careful consideration, wasn't this too abrupt? As it turns out, did he also notice her when she was looking at him with interest?

Li Xiang carefully thought about this. Just in case someone was trying to trick her, she called the servant girl that had brought her the letter to ask, "Who gave you this letter? Where is that person?"

The servant girl in front of her respectfully and cautiously said, "To respond to Miss, it was delivered by a servant girl that had been assigned to Marquis Ping Yuan's daughter. That person has already left."

Hearing these words, was this letter really from Liang Yu?

He didn't want to reveal this secret, so he used his younger sister's servant girl to fool other people? This wasn't impossible.

Li Xiang pursed her lips, and then she showed a clear and obvious smile. This Liang Yu could be considered to have good eyesight. He had only seen her once and had known to write "as beautiful as a celestial immortal" to describe her. It seemed that he wasn't a warrior that only knew martial arts.

She folded the note and put it into her sleeve. As for whether or not she would go, she would have to see... After all, she didn't know Liang Yu. What if he was only playing a trick on her? She had to wait and see. She would decide after the banquet.

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The sun was setting in the west. The sunset glow was multi-colored and gorgeous.

The banquet had already started in the front courtyard. The men were sitting in the receiving room. It was arranged for the women to have their dinner at the reception pavilion.

It was slightly cold at the top of the mountain. Wei Luo had put on a beizi (a type of outer robe) embroidered with begonia flowers and twining branches. She was walking to the reception pavilion with Liang Yu Rong.

On the way there, Wei Luo said to Liang Yu Rong, "I heard that older brother Liang Yu had successfully hunted a deer and two rabbits today. When I recently asked Chang Hong, he said he wasn't able to catch anything."

Liang Yu Rong nodded. She was quite proud as she said, "My older brother has been practicing archery for about seven or eight years since he was child. This naturally wouldn't be difficult for him."

Wei Luo smiled and asked, "Could Chang Hong ask older brother

Liang Yu for advice? He won't be able to learn much from one night, but it would be possible for older brother Liang Yu to pass on some of his experiences. If Chang Hong can't even hunt a rabbit this time, he'll feel really bad when we return home tomorrow."

Liang Yu Rong straightforwardly agreed, "Of course, he can! I'll send someone to ask my older brother right now. After the banquet is over, I'll have him teach Chang Hong."

Ah Luo's eyes were curved as she said, "That would be great! How about they directly go to the rear courtyard's lakeside? That area is big and would be a good place to shoot arrows without worrying about hurting anyone."

Anywhere would have been fine. Liang Yu Rong didn't have any problems with that spot. She immediately had a servant girl go to the receiving room to tell Liang Yu to go the rear courtyard's lakeside after the banquet to share with Wei Chang Hong his hunting experiences.

After Wei Luo repeatedly thanked her, they reached the reception pavilion.

Many people were already in the reception pavilion when they arrived. In addition to Li Xiang, there were also Gao Dan Yang and Gao Qing Yang. The young women were cheerfully talking with each other and gathered in groups of twos and threes. The scene was quite lively.

When Li Xiang saw Wei Luo, she quietly snorted and turned her head around without greeting her.

Contrary to expectations, Gao Dan Yang walked forward with a smile to link her arm with Wei Luo's. With a warm and friendly attitude, she led Wei Luo to an eight-treasure couch to sit, "Come here to sit, younger sister Ah Luo. You two have come too late. All the other seating areas are full. Put up with sitting here for a little while until the banquet begins."

This level of fondness made Wei Luo feel overwhelmed by favor from a superior. She blinked and asked, "Older sister Gao?"

Gao Dang Yang was wearing a sky blue crepe jacket, an olive green crepe skirt, and a beautiful moon white cloak. She was the oldest woman at this gather. Twenty years old was the age when a woman was her most beautiful. This was the age when a woman's ignorance and immaturity had faded away and her charm and innocence were harmoniously blended together, and she was as perfect as nature.

She seemed to not mind her age. Gao Dang Yang's smile was appropriate for the occasion as she said, "I've met you a few times before, but I've never had the chance to talk to with you. I'm finally able to sit down and have a conversation with you. When I think about it, this opportunity wasn't easy."

Wei Luo pursed her lips. Her smiling expression was just right, "Older sister Gao is too polite. I didn't expect that you would still remember me."

Gao Dan Yang personally poured a cup of tea and placed the teacup in front of Wei Luo. Hearing Wei Luo's words, she sighed with sorrow and said, "How could I not remember you? The first time that I met you was in the palace. Older cousin Jing wanted to give you the kittens that I had given him. I was furious at that time and almost had a quarrel with older brother Jing."

Wei Luo held the teacup. She only smiled without saying anything.

A moment later, she slowly asked, "What about those three kittens? Are they still there?"

Gao Dan Yang glanced at her and unhappily said, "They've been gone for a long time. They all died the following year."

Wei Luo regretfully and sympathetically said, "Oh. What a pity."

The two of them continued their perfunctory conversation. Most

of it was Gao Dan Yang speaking and Wei Luo listening. Wei Luo wasn't familiar with her and they didn't have any common interests. So, she only politely accompanied her. During the past few years, Han-shi had done an excellent job in teaching her, so Wei Luo's face didn't reveal the slightest impatience. Instead, it seemed like she was earnestly listening to Gao Dan Yang's words.

Actually, Wei Luo clearly understood that Gao Dan Yang didn't like her. This type of feeling didn't need to be confirmed. It was completely dependent on a woman's intuition.

From the time that she mentioned those three kittens, Wei Luo became aware of the hostility that Gao Dan Yang felt towards her.

As for the reason behind this hostility... for now, she didn't know why.

Soon, the banquet started. Wei Luo stood up and said her goodbye to Gao Dan Yang, "Yu Rong is waiting for me. If older sister Gao has other things to say, let's talk when we see each other on another day. Today, I'll have to excuse myself first."

Gao Dan Yang smiled and generously said, "Young sister Ah Luo can go. Let's talk another day."

Wei Luo turned around and left. Gao Dan Yang sat on the eight-treasure couch and looked at Wei Luo's back as she left. Gao Dan Yang's smile was gradually put away. She sunk into contemplation and didn't move for a long time.

## Chapter 53.2

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During the banquet, Liang Yu Rong and Wei Zheng were sitting to the left and right side of Wei Luo respectively. Li Xiang was sitting to the right of Wei Zheng.

Li Xiang had been somewhat uneasy this entire time. She would frequently give her personal servant girl a meaningful look to have her go outside to check on the situation. That servant girl would constantly leave and return to whisper a few words into her ear. It seemed that she hadn't found out anything. Otherwise, Li Xiang's facial expression wouldn't become more and more ugly.

Wei Luo supported her cheek with her hand. There was a smile on her lips as she pretended to not see Li Xiang's actions. She picked up a piece of shark fin with her chopsticks to place on Liang Yu Rong's plate and deliberately asked, "Jin Lu just told me that Chang Hong didn't see older brother Liang Yu. Where did older brother Liang Yu go?"

Liang Yu Rong paused and asked without thinking, "Didn't my older brother go to the rear courtyard's lakeside?"

Chang Hong really did want to consult and ask Liang Yu for advice. But, he didn't mention going to the rear courtyard's lakeside. Wei Luo had made up this entire story and she acted out her next part well. With a confused expression on her face, she asked, "He went to the backyard?"

Liang Yu Rong nodded. She thought that Wei Luo didn't believe her and prepared to call out to a servant girl to look for her older brother, "I'll have someone look for him..."

Wei Luo quickly stopped her, "It's fine. It's not that urgent. Let's talk about it after we finish eating. It'll be fine to let Chang Hong wait for a bit."

Liang Yu Rong could only sit back down, but she felt confused.

She had clearly asked her servant girl to go and speak with her older brother. Why didn't he go?

On the side, Li Xiang heard their conversation. Her heart was fluttering and she wasn't in the mood to continue eating. She only sat there eating the food without tasting it. After half a cup of tea, she finally stood up and said her good-byes to the nearby people, "I'm already full. I'm going to leave earlier. Sisters, enjoy your meal."

After she said this, she turned around and left.

Behind her, Wei Luo slowly revealed her smile. Her craftiness was hidden in her smile.

Not even a moment later, Liang Yu Rong couldn't resist having a servant girl go and ask around about Liang Yu's location. The servant girl quickly returned and said that Liang Yu was currently eating dinner in the reception room and hadn't gone to the rear courtyard's lakeside.

Liang Yu Rong was a little bit angry and said to Wei Lui, "My older brother went back on his word..."

Wei Luo didn't mind at all. She smiled and said, "It's fine. Perhaps, he was stopped at the banquet. Older brother Liang Yu shouldn't be blamed. But, I'm worried that Chang Hong might still be waiting in the rear courtyard's lakeside. I'll go over there to look."

Liang Yu Rong nodded and asked out of worry, "It's dark out. Want me to go with you?"

Wei Luo said, "No need. It'll be fine if I go there with Jin Lu. If I haven't returned in an hour, you can bring people to look for me."

Jin He Villa covered an enormous area. A large distance separated the rear courtyard from the front courtyard. It would take thirty minutes to go from one place to the other. It was already night now and it was quiet everywhere. It would be really

scary to walk on the path alone.

The more that Wei Luo walked, the farther she was. She soon arrived at the rear courtyard's lakeside. She stopped behind a banyan tree. The moon was covered with clouds and only faintly illuminated the lakeside. There was a person standing there. It was Li Xiang.

Of course, Liang Yu wouldn't have come here at this time. When he arrived at the receiving room, he would meet Chang Hong and asked him about his request to go the rear courtyard after the banquet. And, Chang Hong would have told him that he hadn't made this request. He and Chang Hong wouldn't be suspicious. They would only think that they were acting unnecessarily and dismiss this matter. Wei Luo's ultimate goal was only to lead Li Xiang here.

Not far away from Wei Luo, Li Xiang had been waiting at the lakeside without seeing Liang Yu's figure. She walked back and forth twice. Her eyebrows showed a trace of impatience as she looked forward. Didn't they say that Liang Yu would be at the rear courtyard? Why was there no one here when she came? Could he have already left after waiting for a while?

The servant girl at her side indignantly said, "Miss, could Marquis Ping Yuan's heir be tricking you? We waited here for so long and he still hasn't come."

Worried that there was something wrong, Li Xiang resolutely said to her servant girl, "I'm not going to continue waiting. Let's go back. If anyone asks, just say that I happened to pass by here while I walking around."

The servant girl hurriedly nodded.

The two of them were just about to leave when they heard a soft and delicate voice from behind them say, "To walk all the way here just for a stroll, younger sister Li Xiang is really in a leisurely mood. My eyes have been opened to a broader world view."



Li Xiang suddenly stopped and turned around to look, "Who's there?"

The limestone-paved lane was illuminated with lanterns that were on stone pillars. The lanterns only illuminated one side. Wei Luo came out from the shadows. Behind her, there was a gentle glimmer of light. Her eyes smiled as she slowly said, "Of course, it's me. Who else did younger sister Li Xiang think it was?"

Li Xiang's face became ugly from anger. She coldly asked, "Why are you here? Did you follow me?"

Wei Luo didn't answer. She walked towards her, "Is it important whether or not I followed you? Right now, isn't the important issue who you're waiting for?"

She had deliberately avoided everyone on the way here. No one should have discovered her here. How did Wei Luo know? Or could it be that she had known from the beginning?

As expected, Wei Luo stopped and slowly smiled as if she just realized something. Wei Luo looked at her and asked, "Let me guess, are you waiting for older brother Liang Yu?"

Li Xiang gritted her teeth.

Wei Luo's pink lips slight curved up as she slowly asked, "Did I guess right?"

Li Xiang fiercely glared at her and wished that she could stab two holes into Wei Luo's body, "Did you write that letter?"

Wei Luo put her arms behind her back. Her tone was relaxed as she casually admitted, "Does it matter if I was the one who wrote the letter? Do you have evidence?"

Wei Luo wasn't afraid of Li Xiang telling anyone about the contents of the letter, much less showing the letter to anyone else. Because, at that time, even if it was proven that she wrote the letter, only Li Xiang's reputation would be damaged and not hers. Li Xiang had already eaten this grievance that couldn't be spoken

of the moment she came to the rear courtyard.

As expected, Li Xiang gritted her teeth and didn't say anything.

Wei Luo held back her laughter. From her peripheral vision, she saw a glimpse of faint light that wasn't far away. She walked a few steps forward to Li Xiang's side. She leaned close to her ear and whispered, "You probably have that letter with you, right? What would happen if someone finds that letter? I wonder how sensational it would be if news went out that Prince Ru Yang's daughter was privately meeting with a man at night."

Li Xiang was finally at the end of her patience. She raised her hand and fiercely pushed her, "You wretched girl\*."

\* (T/N: Li Xiang says slut, but she's intending it as the archaic meaning of immoral woman instead of modern meaning of sexually promiscuous woman.)

Although Li Xiang had pushed very hard, Wei Luo had prepared in advance and could have stayed standing if she wanted. Instead, Wei Luo intentionally staggered two steps back and fell to the ground!

Li Xiang raised her hand and was about to viciously slap down, "Despicable!"

The people that weren't far away had finally arrived and saw this scene by chance. Liang Yu Rong wasn't the only person that had come. A sapphire blue-robed figure quickly rushed forward, stopped Li Xiang's hand from slapping Wei Luo, and reprimanded, "Stop!"

Wei Luo looked up. It was actually Li Song illuminated by the lantern's light.

## Chapter 54.1

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In addition to Liang Yu Rong, many unfamiliar people had also come.

Liang Yu Rong had waited in the reception pavilion for a while without Wei Luo returning. She thought that Wei Luo had gotten lost in the villa, so she had prepared to go look for her. By lucky coincidence, the young men had come from the receiving room to invite the young women to go to the rear courtyard's octagonal pavilion to admire the moon and play wine-drinking games. Liang Yu Rong was worried that she wouldn't know the way either, so she followed these people here. Just as she had arrived at the rear courtyard, she saw that there were two people at the lakeside. She recognized that one of the people was Wei Luo and walked forward to greet her.

She didn't expect that she would see such scene!

Without any explanation, Li Xiang had pushed Wei Luo to the ground, cursed at her, and was even raising her hand to hit her.

Liang Yu Rong didn't know what had happened, but just from this scene, she could tell that Li Xiang's upbringing wasn't good! Nothing could have happened between two young women that would justify her actions. Even if Wei Luo had intentionally offended her, she still couldn't curse her with "wretched girl!" After all, Wei Luo's status wasn't inferior to hers. Even if Li Xiang was very angry, she should still forgive or at least privately resolve the issue since Wei Luo was a member of Duke Ying's family instead of coming to blows with Wei Luo in public. This action would not only damage other people's impression of her moral character, but it would also show her lack of intelligence.

Liang Yu Rong wasn't the only person who thought this. Everyone else at the scene also thought this.

Unfortunately, Li Xiang had been angered by Wei to the point of

losing her reasoning and couldn't think so logical at the moment. Seeing Wei Luo on the ground and pretending to be pitiful, she couldn't help but feel angrier, "Older brother, don't stop me! Do you know what she did? She's a person that harbors evil intentions. She deliberately lured me here. She... She's too shameless..."

Before she could finish speaking, Li Song had severely slapped Li Xiang!

Li Xiang was suddenly silenced. She clutched her cheek and incredulously looked at Li Song.

Li Song's face was ugly. He put down his hand and clenched his fist inside his sleeve, "You're too outrageous! Where did you learn such foul language? You must not be used to this new place and became muddle-headed." After saying this, he said to Li Xiang's servant girl, Qiong Zi, "Your Miss has become muddle-headed. Why didn't you stop her instead of bring her here? Bring her back to her room first. I'll deal with you when we get back home!"

Qiong Zi's face was distressed. She held onto Li Xiang and nervously said, "Miss, let's go back..."

Li Xiang had grown up in the shelter of her parents' palms and had never suffered any injury. Now, her older brother had slapped her without holding back. Her ear felt as if it was buzzing and her cheek felt as if it was burning. She bitterly bit her lip. Her eyes were full of tears, "Older brother is the one who's confused. You would help an outsider instead of your younger sister. I'm going to go home and tell mom so that she'll teach you a lesson."

She didn't dare to say that Wei Luo had tricked her. She would rather bear such a big grievance than tell the matter about the letter in front of everyone else. After all, even if Wei Luo was the one who wrote that letter, she would still be showing that she had thoughts about a private meeting with a man by showing up here. No matter what, she wouldn't be able to defend her innocence.

When the two things were compared, her reputation was naturally more important.

But if she chose that option, she would bear the negative reputation of an uncivilized and arrogant person that caused trouble without reason. This would also have a very negative effect on unmarried girls.

She fiercely glared at Wei Luo. She hated her so much that she was gnashing her teeth. Wei Luo had truly designed a good play that had her jumping into her trap and left her with no way to explain herself!

Li Xiang unwillingly turned around and left. She was so angry that her eyes were red.

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At the lakeside, Wei Luo had originally only wanted to pretend she had fallen. Unexpectedly, she hadn't been mindful enough when she was falling. Her foot had stepped on a pebble that was sticking out on the ground and her ankle twisted. It had been hurting until now! There had been too many people before, so she couldn't check her injury. Those people had now left and the only people left were Liang Yu Rong, Liang Yu, Li Song, and Chang Hong.

She couldn't resist touching her ankle that had already swollen. It was piercingly painful even if she touched it slightly. She couldn't resist gasping. It seemed that when she did something bad, she would have to pay a price. But, this price was a bit too ruthless. Her ankle hurt so much that she wanted to cry.

Chang Hong and Liang Yu had also come with Liang Yu Rong. Chang Hong had been protectively standing in front of Wei Luo. His handsome face had been twisted and sunk into something scary. It was only because Li Xiang was a woman that he didn't strike her in anger.

He heard Wei Luo's gasp and quickly turned around to face her. He anxiously asked, "Ah Luo, are you okay? Are you hurt from falling?"

Wei Luo pointed at her ankle and tearfully said, "My ankle twisted."

Hearing this, he became angrier. Li Xiang caused it all. He shouldn't have let her off so easily! He turned around to fiercely glare at Li Song with extreme disgust, "If something happens to Ah Luo, I definitely won't let you off."

Li Song didn't seem to care about his threat. He looked at Wei Luo with an unclear, contradicting and complicated meaning. After a long time, he said with difficulty, "My younger sister was wrong tonight. I'll apologize to you on her behalf..."

Wei Luo didn't appreciate his words. She coldly said, "No need."

His face changed and he suddenly glared at her in anger.

Wei Luo continued, "You probably know about our families' intention to become related by marriage. But after today, I discovered that Duke Ying's residence can't afford to have a young lady with Li Xiang's temperament. I'll speak to daddy when I go back. Chang Hong and Li Xiang's potential engagement will end here. Chang Hong is soft-hearted and won't be able to bear her unreasonable behavior." After she said this, she turned her head away from him. She stretched out her hand towards Chang Hong and said, "Chang Hong, carry me to the eastern courtyard..."

Hearing her words, Chang Hong leaned over to carry her. Who would have expected that someone would be quicker than him? Before he even touched her clothing, the other person's hand was supporting Wei Luo's back and his other hand was beneath her thighs. The person's voice was calm and mellow, "This prince will carry you back."

## Chapter 54.2

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Chang Hong stood up and saw that other person's slanted eyebrows and indifferently cold, thin lips. It was Prince Jing.

Startled, Chang Hong watched him pick up Wei Luo in a bridal carry. With furrowed eyebrows, Chang Hong said, "Men and women should keep their distance from each other. Let me carry her instead."

Zhao Jie pretended to not hear him. As he walked, he said to Zhu Geng, "This prince's room has medicinal wine. Bring it over to fourth miss's room."

Zhu Geng agreed and immediately disappeared into the dim light of night.

Fortunately, the lighting was dim here. Most of the people were in the octagonal pavilion admiring the moon, playing wine-drinking games, and composing and reciting poetry. They weren't paying attention to the situation over here. Zhao Jie couldn't resist picking up Wei Luo and firmly walking away from this troublesome place.

Wei Luo didn't expect that he would suddenly appear. She dazedly looked at him and could only see his chin and thin lips. She uneasily shifted around and said in an anxious tone, "Big brother let me down. It won't be good if anyone sees... Chang Hong. Let Chang Hong carry me."

Zhao Jie didn't let go of her. Instead, he held her tighter. "Does your foot not hurt anymore?"

She couldn't tell what he was feeling from the sound of his voice.

The hollow of his palm felt scalding hot. Only a layer of clothing separated her skin from his. It made her feel somewhat uneasy.

Her eyelashes trembled and raised her eyelids. Her teary eyes gave off the feeling of innocence, "It hurts."

Zhao Jie's face finally became slightly milder, but his steps didn't stop. He carried her all the way to the eastern courtyard. He entered her inner room and placed her down on her rosewood arhat bed.

How could he enter her inner room so naturally? Although she had been close to him since her childhood, she was grown up now. Shouldn't they avoid doing things that would arouse suspicion? Wasn't he the one that said to not allow men to freely enter her courtyard?

As Wei Luo was puzzling this out, Zhao Jie had already crouched down in front of her. He took off her red shoe that was embroidered with golden tree peony flowers, and then took off her white silk sock, "Let this prince see your injury."

A tender white foot was exposed in front of a man's eyes. Her toenails were an attractive pink and appeared smooth and delicate. At the moment, because she was nervous and ill at ease, her five toes were slightly curved inwards. It was both shy and cute. Zhao Jie's eyes turned and became darker. Without a change in his expression, he held her foot and checked her injury.

Wei Luo shrunk backwards. She wasn't used to his touch, "Let me do it..."

Zhao Jie looked up at her. At the same time, his fingers gently pressed down on the spot that she was injured, "How can you do it yourself? Does this hurt?"

Wei Luo whimpered. Her tears almost came out of her eyes. She curled up and her forehead unconsciously came to Zhao Jie's shoulder. She pitifully said, "Big brother, be a little more gentle. It hurts..."

Her sweet milky voice was right at his ear. Zhao Jie felt that half of his body had become numb. He turned around to look at the side of her small face. Her white teeth were biting her pink lip. Teardrops were hanging on her thick and long eyelashes. This



pitiful appearance really made it difficult for him to maintain control.

Zhao Jie slightly lowered his head. His thin lips wiped her soft cheek. With a hoarse voice, he said, "Hug me if it hurts. Ah Luo, be obedient. Don't flail about."

Sure enough, she was guilelessly obedient. Her arms went around his neck and she hugged him without resisting.

This alluring body was in his embrace. Her cheek was next to his neck. Warmth was suddenly scattered on his skin. It was as if countless bugs were crawling on him, climbed into his heart, and slowly bitten away all of his rationality. Zhao Jie closed his eyes. His palm was placed on her lower back, near her waist. He restrained himself and didn't go any lower.

Jin Lu and Bai Lan looked at each other in dismay and saw the other person's uneasy.

Soon, Zhu Geng arrived with the medicinal wine. Zhao Jie had put a towel on Wei Luo to make a cold compress on her ankle. Then, he personally spread the medicinal wine on Wei Luo. His actions were very careful and gentle as if he was caring for a priceless treasure. After the medicine was applied, Zhao Jie put on her sock and shoe for her.

After he washed his hands, he went back to her side and said, "Don't walk at all tomorrow. After the hunting ceremony is over, this prince will come to see you and apply medicine one more time. You'll be fine the day after tomorrow."

She wasn't seriously injured and the effect of that medicine was good. As long as she properly rested, the injury wouldn't be a problem.

Wei Luo sat on the edge of the bed. Her hands were holding onto the bedframe as she looked at him. Her tender little face was imbued with gratefulness, "Thank you big brother..."

Zhao Jie was standing in front of her. Although the expression on his face was warmer than when they were at the lakeside, there still wasn't a smile.

Wei Luo remembered that they had parted on bad terms yesterday. She guessed that he was still angry about her words. Actually, she didn't have any other meaning. She only wanted to tell him that truth. Who would expected that his face would become so ugly? She tilted her head and said to his dark eyes, "Is big brother still angry? In fact, you're not other men either. Your kind treatment towards Ah Luo, Ah Luo remembers it all in her heart."

There was only a tiny ripple of change in Zhao Jie's stubborn eyes. He didn't respond.

Seeing that he wasn't speaking, Wei Luo gripped his sleeve without thinking and continues looking at him. Just when Wei Luo thought that he wouldn't speak, he raised his hand, stroked her head, and asked, "Do you want to marry Song Hui?"

Wei Luo blinked. She didn't know why he would ask this question. There didn't seem to be any reason for bringing it up.

She didn't really want to marry Song Hui. She only thought of Song Hui as an older brother and didn't have any romantic feelings towards him. And, whenever she saw Song Hui, she would think of his engagement with Wei Zheng in her previous life. She hated Wei Zheng too much, so she couldn't accept Song Hui who had once been engaged to Wei Zheng, even if it was something that had happened in her previous life.

But, she wouldn't tell Zhao Jie these things. She looked down and said, "This is the engagement that my parents arranged. My opinion isn't important."

Zhao Jie's thumb went down to cover the small red birthmark between her eyebrows and he quietly asked, "If you didn't have this engagement, would you want to marry him?"

She looked up with a startled expression.

His thin lips curved up into a faint smile. He patiently and systematically guided, "Ah Luo, what kind of man do you want to marry?"

Wei Luo pursed her lips. After a while, she finally said, "A person that treats me very very well."

Zhao Jie gazed into her eyes and slowly asked, "Like the way that this prince treats you very well?"

# Chapter 55

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Ah Luo had eaten too much bitterness in her previous life. In this lifetime, her request was simple. She would be satisfied if the person treated her very very well. When she was in a helpless and distressed situation, he would step forward bravely and put her behind his body. He would keep her from bearing hardships and feeling hurt and wronged. He would satisfy all of her wants and be completely obedient to her... Now that she thought about it, her request didn't seem that simple. At the very least, expecting him to be completely obedient was making it a bit difficult for him.

Zhao Jie had just said, "Like the way that this prince treats you very well?"

Wei Luo couldn't help thinking about the previous years. Zhao Jie had treated her very well. His actions could be described as completely obedient and pandering to her every whim. But, Ah Luo had never considered him. She had always thought that they weren't traveling on the same path. No matter how well he treated her, she always thought he had some hidden motive. For example, that time when he tied Li Song to a target to help her vent her anger, he had done it because of Prince Ru Yang and was just incidentally helping her.

Besides, the difference between their ages was too big. She had always called him "big brother" and in her heart she considered him as a big brother. She thought that he and Gao Dan Yang would be a good match for each other and had never thought of the possibility of him being her sweetheart, so how could she have any improper thoughts about him?

Ah Luo thought that he was joking. She curved her almond eyes and went along with his words, "He has to treat me better than big brother. He can't show an unhappy face in front of me or bully me." She paused and let go of his sleeve. Her thin lips smiled softly, "He can't be as old as big brother. It would be the best if he's only

three or four years older than me."

Zhao Jie's expression was bit strange, "Am I really old?"

She exaggeratedly nodded and told him, "You're nine years older than me. My father had me and Chang Hong before he was twenty."

Zhao Jie, "..."

The girl didn't seem to understand his feelings and nonchalantly continued stabbing at his heart, "But big brother is very good-looking and doesn't seem like he's over twenty. When my daddy was young, he was also good-looking. But compared to you, he's immediately inferior in comparison."

She thought that she was comforting him. But in reality, her words were a shock to him.

She compared him to her daddy? So, he had this type of senior position in her heart? No wonder she remained ignorant and unmoved despite his hints. The most basic reason was because of this. She had never considered him that way, so how could he move her heart?

Zhao Jie closed his eyes. His movement in stroking her beauty mark became slower and slower and finally stopped. He wanted to use this opportunity to make his intentions clear, "This prince is twenty-two years old this year without a wife or concubine. Isn't it a little early for me to be a father?"

Wei Luo looked up. Her eyes were clear and her thoughts were honest, "Is it early? Why hasn't big brother married yet? You're not young anymore. Is the empress not anxious?"

The girl was actually completely serious as she asked about his marriage in concern. Her tone was the same as Empress Chen when she had interrogated him. How could Empress Chen not be anxious? From the time that he returned from Bin Zhou, every time that he entered the place, Empress Chen would ask about this

for over an hour. It was okay if he didn't want to marry Gao Dan Yang. There were other girls from noble families that he could select from. But, he kept using various reasons to refuse her to the point that Empress Chen didn't want to see him anymore. She would only see him again once he was willing to marry.

Ultimately, what was his reason? It was because of her.

She was still young. It would be too early to marry her and bring her home to love her tenderly. He was worried that she wouldn't be able to bear it. He had to wait at least another two years. At that time, regardless if it was Song Hui or Li Song, it wouldn't be a problem for him.

Right now, it was more important to have this girl understand things properly.

He straightened up, "Worrying won't change anything. Ah Luo, do you think big brother is similar to your daddy?"

Ah Luo shook her head and sincerely said, "Not similar."

He smiled and asked, "What about compared to your older brother Song Hui?"

She pursed her lips. Her eyes turned and she didn't answer this question.

What was there to compare? They were two completely different people. There wasn't an area that they were similar. How could she compare?

Zhao Jie could only hold her bright and clean chin and directly look at her little face to say, "I'm only a little older than you. I'm not old. This prince will be angry if you say this again."

She looked at his dark eyes. Her little mouth stopped smiling and she rather dispiritedly said, "I understand. I won't say it again..."

Zhao Jie's thumb gently stroked her chin and lightly brushed over her pink lips. He still wanted to say something, but was

suddenly stopped by a cold voice that said, "Let go of Ah Luo."

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After Zhao Jie carried Wei Luo away, Chang Hong had originally wanted to follow them, but he was stopped by Liang Yu Rong on the way. She had asked him what was going on. He didn't know what had happened either, but since Ah Luo did this, she must have her reasons. Liang Yu Rong wouldn't let him go until her questioning led him to tell her about his engagement with Li Xiang. At that point, she suddenly realized Ah Luo's intentions. He finally broke free from Liang Yu Rong and arrived at the eastern courtyard. He didn't expect to see this scene as soon as he entered Ah Luo's room

Zhao Jie had entered Ah Luo's inner room and was touching Ah Luo's face. The two of them were so close to each other. A stranger might think they had a very close relationship.

What couldn't be calmly discussed? Why were they touching?

Chang Hong's gaze towards Zhao Jie immediately became full of hostility. He walked forward to separate the two of them and had Ah Luo behind him to protect her. He looked at Zhao Jie without saying anything.

Zhao Jie retreated half a step. The corners of his mouth were slightly curved up in a smile. He had known that Ah Luo had an extremely protective twin younger brother. He didn't have a chance to meet him before. Meeting him today, Chang Hong's protectiveness had exceeded his expectations. He smiled and calmly said, "You're Chang Hong, right? Ah Luo's ankle was twisted, so this prince brought her back. You don't have to be so vigilant. This prince won't do anything."

Chang Hong's thin lips pursed into a line. He didn't believe Zhao Jie's words. If he really wouldn't do anything, then what was with his gaze when he looked at Ah Luo? The desire and thirst in his eyes were too obvious, only Ah Luo was stupid enough to not

notice. Chang Hong's response was delayed. "Many thanks for bringing Ah Luo back, your highness Prince Jing. But, it's late now. Men and women should keep their distance from each other. If the prince continues to stay, I'm worried that people will gossip. I'll have to request you to leave."

Zhao Jie tried to look at the girl behind Chang Hong, but Chang Hong closely blocked her and he couldn't see her expression. After he thought about it, he decided to not be impatient for results at the moment. He curved his lips and said, "Then, this prince will leave now. Ah Luo's foot shouldn't touch the ground. As her young brother, you should take extra care of her." After he said this, he didn't stay any longer. He walked out of Ah Luo's inner room.

After Zhao Jie left, Chang Hong turned around to ask Wei Luo, "Ah Luo, did he do anything to you?"

Wei Luo pointed at her wrapped up foot and thought that Chang Hong had overreacted a bit, "Older brother Prince Jing helped me with applying medicine and wrapping up my foot. Chang Hong, weren't you too rude to him?"

Being blamed by her, Chang Hong felt somewhat wronged, "He was touching you."

Wei Luo paused. She hadn't thought about Zhao Jie's action. She thought that he had only touched her face to get her attention. When she was a child, Zhao Jie had frequently stroked her head and rubbed her cheeks. Now, she was grown up. But, it was understandable that he wouldn't immediately remember this and would sometimes go back to old habits.

But now that Chang Hong mentioned it, she suddenly realized. Zhao Jie's action was too intimate. Should she pay more attention in the future?

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The next day, Wei Luo couldn't walk, so she had Jin Lu and Bai



Lan carry her to the garden to soak up the sunshine. She sat on the couch and leaned against a pillow. Just as she was about to take a nap because she was feeling sleepy, Liang Yu Rong energetically came to visit her.

Wei Luo hadn't explained to her what had happened last night. From Chang Hong, she had learned enough to guess what approximately had happened, but she still had questions. Today, Wei Luo couldn't go to Zhan Yue Building to watch the hunting, so she didn't go either and came here to keep her company instead and also take the opportunity to ask her about last night.

Liang Yu Rong sat down across from her. While picking up a cherry from her steamed cherry dessert, she curiously asked her, "Did you do that intentionally?"

Wei Luo closed her eyes and slowly said, "En."

Liang Yu Rong blinked her eyes in surprise and even forgot to eat the cherry, "Were you lying when you borrowed my older brother's book from me?"

Wei Luo suddenly opened her eyes. Her bright eyes were like an overflowing pool of clear spring water. She smiled fully as she said, "It wouldn't be counted as lying. Teacher did want me to learn cursive script, but daddy said that girls didn't need to know so much and didn't agree to me learning it."

Liang Yu Rong finally understood. There was a clearly a little fox in front of her with too many clever thoughts. This entire plan was just to mess with Li Xiang! She sighed and openly admitted her defeat, "Why don't you agree with Li Xiang and Chang Hong's engagement? What do you dislike about her?"

Wei Luo put away her smile and thoroughly thought for a moment, "When I was Princess Tianji's study companion, I met Li Xiang several times in the palace. She was very young then, but she acted jointly with Zhao Lin Lang to bully Liuli. During a bitterly cold day, they harmed Liuli by causing her to falling into a lake.

Liuli was sick for half a month and almost died."

After saying this, her eyes turned and she looked at Liang Yu Rong, "With that type of moral character, do you think she could have become a good person?"

Liang Yu Rong's surprise wasn't small, "It's shocking that such a thing happened!"

This event had happened several years ago. Perhaps, Liuli had already forgotten, but she would always remembered this. Although the sixth prince had become their scapegoat in the end, Empress Chen probably knew the truth in her heart."

She placed a finger against her lips and told Liang Yu Rong, "Don't tell anyone else about this. Otherwise, trouble will be come to you."

Liang Yu Rong repeatedly nodded. She closed her lips and made a gesture of threading a needle to show that her lips would be sealed shut. She definitely wouldn't make irresponsible remarks.

The two girls sat in the garden for an entire morning. Liang Yu Rong stayed in the eastern courtyard to eat lunch and didn't leave afterwards.

When it was around 3-5pm, a bugle horn resounded throughout Zhang Xun Mountain. The hunting competition had officially ended.

One after another, the men came back from the mountain and returned to their own courtyard. The steward took people with him to take inventory of the prey and added up who had hunted the most animals, that person would be the winner of this year's competition.

Wei Luo wanted to go visit Chang Hong and Liang Yu Rong naturally wanted to go look for her older brother Liang Yu. Coincidentally, they were walking on the same path together to go Rong Courtyard. Chang Hong and Liang Yu Rong were staying in

the same courtyard. Before Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong were close to Rong Courtyard, they saw a group of people from far away carrying a young man and entering the courtyard. The young man's clothes was mottled with blood and he seemed unconscious.

Wei Luo's heart jumped. She increased her speed and walked forward. She grabbed a servant that came out from the courtyard and asked, "Who was that injured person?"

The servant was going to look for Prince Jing and the steward. Hearing her words, he replied, "It's Duke Ying's family's sixth young master. He was injured while hunting and is currently unconscious!"

# Chapter 56.1

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Chang Hong?

How could he be injured? He should understand what was appropriate behavior and wouldn't do anything dangerous.

Wei Luo's heart was panicked. She promptly pushed pass the servant and walked towards the courtyard!

From behind her, Liang Yu Rong called out, "Ah Luo, walk slower. Your ankle hasn't healed yet!"

But how could she listen to her? Chang Hong had been injured and she didn't know how serious the injury was. From that person's words, it seemed very serious. Where was he injured? She was panic-stricken as she walked into the room. She saw two doctors at Chang Hong's bedside. They were staunching his bleeding and applying medicine. There was an arrow stuck deep in the right side of his chest and his blood had dyed a big patch of his clothes red. His face was deathly pale, his eyes were tightly closed, his eyebrows were furrowed, and he was already unconscious.

Wei Luo endured the pain from her ankle, walked forward, and asked Liang Yu, "Older brother Liang Yu, why did Chang Hong get injured?"

Liang Yu had come back with Chang Hong. He should know what had happened.

As expected, Liang Yu clenched his fist. He recalled that scene and slowly said, "It was Li Song..."

At that time, he hadn't been near Chang Hong so he wasn't aware of the exact circumstance. He only knew that when he went over there, the arrow had already shot Chang Hong down and Li Song was on his horse and holding a bow. Liang Yu stepped forward, grabbed Li Song's collar, and fiercely scolded him. Just as he was about to hit him, he saw that Chang Hong's physical condition

wasn't good. He could only let go of him and hurriedly bring Chang Hong back.

Wei Luo's body trembled and she bit her lips tightly. Li Song. It was Li Song again. What did he want to do? Why couldn't he die?

Probably because Liang Yu could detect her unusual behavior, he comforted her, "Younger sister Ah Luo, don't worry. The doctors said that the injury wouldn't be fatal. As long as the arrow is taken out and he rests in bed for half a month, he'll be fine.

But, Ah Luo didn't feel that way. Just because the arrow didn't take his life, it didn't mean that Chang Hong should endure this injury for nothing. This matter shouldn't be left unsettled.

She suppressed her anger and asked, "Where's Li Song?"

Liang Yu truthfully replied, "He returned from the hunting area with me. He's probably in Eastern Crane Courtyard right now.

She nodded. She already had a plan in her heart. She requested Liang Yu, "If Chang Hong wakes up, older brother Liang Yu, please help me take care of him. I have to leave for a little bit."

Liang Yu said, "Okay." He immediately thought of something and anxiously asked where she was going. But, she didn't reply. She turned around and disappeared behind the red sandalwood screen. Her slender and frail back showed unwavering ruthlessness.

Ah Luo took down her jade and golden hairpin from her hair and hid it inside her sleeve. Step by step, she walked towards Li Song's courtyard. The feeling of piercing pain continuously came from ankle, but it wasn't as deep-rooted as the anger in her heart. She wished that she could kill Li Song right now by having him taste the feeling of an arrow through his heart and to never appear in front of them again.

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At Eastern Crane Courtyard, Li Song was wearing his hunting clothing and standing in the middle of the courtyard. A faint trace

of anxiety was showing in his eyes, "How is Chang Hong's injury?"

His servant reported, "To report to Young Master, I heard from other people that he hasn't woken up yet and the doctors are staunching his bleeding right now..."

His eyebrows furrowed. He didn't reply for a long time, and then he twitchily waved his hand and swept the plates and dishes from the stone table. There was the sound of crashing porcelain on the ground. He said, "Is it serious? Is his life in danger?"

The servant said, "No one has come out from his room. This subordinate isn't sure either..."

Li Song could only compose himself and ask about the other matter, "Was Xiang-er peacefully sent down the mountain?"

The servant nodded, "It's settled. Eldest Young Miss is already in the carriage and on the road back to Prince Ru Yang's residence."

His complexion became a little better. He warned again, "If anyone asks, say that everything was because of me. You can't mention Xiang-er's name to prevent harming her reputation."

So, it turns out that Wei Chang Hong's injury wasn't only related to Li Song, it was also related his younger sister, Li Xiang.

Li Xiang had suffered a grievance yesterday and cried the entire night. This morning, her things had been packed away and she was prepared to go home a day early. At that time, it was still the hunting competition and she was walking down the mountain with only a servant girl. It was possible that she would meet danger.

When Li Song received the news, he hurriedly rushed over there and persuaded her to let him escort her down the mountain. They hadn't walked far before she had requested to shoot a rabbit to bring back with her. Li Song had hit her last night, so his heart felt somewhat guilty and he agreed in order to make her happy.

Li Xiang had followed Prince Ru Yang since she was a child, so

she was familiar with bows and arrows. Her posture when shooting was extremely proper. She aimed her bow at a grey rabbit that wasn't far away. But, when she was releasing the arrow, she suddenly turned towards Wei Chang Hong who had come closer to them. The arrow was released.

Wei Chang Hong was caught off guard. He only had time to move his body slightly to the side and he evaded the arrow from hitting his vital point. The arrow hit the right side of his chest instead. He fell down from his horse and heavily landed on the ground!

Li Song was completely stunned, "Li Xiang!"

Li Xiang hatefully flung the bow down to the ground. The edges of her eyes were red when she said, "Older brother, I hate Wei Luo! People from House Wei are all bad. Wei Luo set me up last night. I want to kill her younger brother..."

Li Song quickly covered her mouth. This time, even though he had the intention of immediately teaching her a lesson, there wasn't time. Soon, other people would be coming here. If other people found out that Li Xiang had shot Chang Hong with the intention of killing him, then her reputation would be ruined. He quickly analyzed the pros and cons of each plan, then he had the servants bring Li Xiang down the mountain and he stayed behind to take the blame for Li Xiang.

## Chapter 56.2

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Li Song finished recalling that memory. When he looked up, he saw a girl at Eastern Crane Courtyard's entrance.

Her small body was stretched taut and covered in sweat despite early spring's cool weather. Her pink lips were tightly pressed together. Her gaze as she looked at him was bone-chilling cold. But then, her gaze unexpectedly became calm as if all of the hostility and anger was taken into her eyes and was waiting for the moment it would burst out.

Li Song felt uneasy from her gaze. He stubbornly said with calmness, "Why did you come here? Shouldn't you be going to see your younger brother?"

Wei Luo clutched her sleeve, didn't reply, and slowly walked to him. She looked up at him with her small face and word by word asked him, "Were you the one that injured Chang Hong?"

He subconsciously took a step backward and said without hesitation, "It was me."

It was him. It was him as expected. Inside her sleeves, Wei Luo's small hands were clenched. She hated him to the extreme, but was able to control her emotions and not seem too anxious. She lightly moved forward and he continued retreating, so she walked forward to be closer. Her petal-like lips simply asked, "Why?"

Eventually, Li Song couldn't continue retreating. His back was against a Chinese parasol tree. When he looked down, he would see her bright black eyes. Unfortunately, there was no emotion in those eyes right now. There wasn't even the pretense of a smile in her eyes only coldness was left. After he thought for a moment, he disapprovingly said, "What reason could there be? This type of thing frequently happens on the hunting grounds. Originally, I wanted to shoot a rabbit, but because he suddenly came out from behind, I shot him accidentally. Couldn't it be that he doesn't



know how to evade when he sees an arrow shooting towards him?"

These words really made a person angry. Wei Luo smiled in anger. The smile didn't reach her eyes; only her lips were slightly curved, "Are you blaming him for not getting out of the way?"

Li Song didn't express an opinion.

Wei Luo has smiled enough. She raised her hand and the hairpin that she had hid in her sleeve was in front of his chest. She slowly smiled and brought the hairpin closer to him until the sharp end of the pin was pressed up against him and would be touching his skin if there weren't a layer of clothing. He felt the ice-cold temperature of the hairpin.

"Li Song, do you think that you can successfully avoid just because you want to?"

There was too much meaning hidden in these words. Li Song's eyes shivered with cold or fear. He fiercely glared at her, "Do you dare to injure me?"

Why wouldn't she dare? If they were allowed to hurt Chang Hong, why couldn't she hurt him?

The hate in her eyes was too obvious. Li Song had a bad feeling. He slowly said, "You..."

Before his words were finished, the hairpin had pierced through the clothing on his chest and ruthlessly went into his chest! Li Song only felt a stab of acute pain. A sweet strong-smell welled up in his throat. He incredulously looked at Wei Luo. He couldn't have expected that she would be able to act so ruthlessly. He hoarsely said, "Wei Luo..."

The two of them were underneath the Chinese parasol tree. An outsider wouldn't see the slightest anomaly. No one would know that the hairpin in Wei Luo's sleeve had deeply pierced Li Song's chest.

Wei Luo held onto the hairpin and pushed the hairpin deeper.

The hate in her eyes had exploded. She wished that he could immediately die. She looked at his painful expression and suddenly felt very joyful. Right now, was Chang Hong feeling the same pain? Could he be a substitute for Chang Hong's pain? She took out her hand and gently touched his eyebrow. In short while, a sweet and touching smile appear on her face. "Li Song, why aren't you calling for people? If you don't call out soon, I won't be able to resist killing you."

The girl's soft fingers gently stroked his face and her sweet smile was right in front of him. The more he looked, the more dazed he became. He felt as if this moment wasn't real.

"You dare..."

Wei Luo didn't stop. Instead, she stood on toes and softly whispered into his year, "Why wouldn't I dare? Haven't I already done it?" As she said this, she gently and slowly rubbed his ear for a moment like a spoiled kitten. It tugged on his heartstrings.

"Li Song, are you not calling for people because you like me?" When she said these words, her eyes were curved and her voice was sweet and soft.

Li Song tightly gritted his teeth. Her loveable, soft body was right in front of him and made him think of that Spring Lantern Festival night. He had hugged her soft and small body in the crowd of people. She had seemed fragile enough that a single touched would shatter her. But he knew that this was his own misperception. She wasn't a fragile, porcelain doll. She treated everyone else very well, but treated him with cold indifference.

He had secretly considered. Was this because he had bullied her when they were children?

But didn't she viciously bully him back in return each time?

He considered himself very contradictory. He clearly hated her to the point of gnashing his teeth, but he couldn't help wanting to see

her. It was normal for them to hate each other. But, why did she say that he liked her? How could that be possible?

Li Song suddenly returned to his senses and firmly pushed her away. With a face full of sweat, he said, "Leave!"

Wei Luo loosened her hand. She had prepared to step back in advance and stood firm afterwards.

Actually, the words she had just said had only been a guess. The look in Li Song's eyes when he looked at her was too familiar. In her previous life, this was the same gaze that the young men in Long Shou village would have when they looked at her. She knew that this look represented love and desire.

How could Li Song love her? She didn't believe it at first. However, at the moment when her hairpin stabbed into him, she had to believe it.

If there wasn't love, how could there be pain?

Li Song was clutching his chest as he slowly slumped to the ground. His body was curled up as he said in a hoarse and powerless voice, "I want you to leave..."

The servant in the courtyard finally discovered that there was something strange over there. Before, the servant had just thought that they were talking. Their voices had been low, so he couldn't hear the detailed content. In addition, Li Song hadn't called him to come closer, so he was doing his own tasks. But, now, when he turned his head, he saw that Li Song's chest was covered in fresh blood. His face was full of surprise. "Young Master!"

Li Song coughed out blood and weakly said, "Help me return to my room."

A servant saw the hairpin that pierced his chest, trembled as he helped Li Song up, and looked at Wei Luo, "Was it her? She..."

Li Song closed his eyes. After a while, he finally spit out three words, "Have her leave."

The servant could only look away from Wei Luo and help Li Song go inside.

Wei Luo was left standing in the garden. In a short moment, she controlled the emotions in her eyes and left Eastern Crane Courtyard. Her steps were slow. Every step brought pain.

She had only walked a few steps, crossed the threshold, and her view suddenly opened up to a wide panorama.

Zhao Jie was only a few steps away from her. He was wearing a light green robe with a persimmon pattern and his bearing was like a pine tree.

She didn't know how long he had waited at the entrance or how much he had seen.

Seeing her leave the courtyard, he stepped forward, but he didn't ask her anything at first. He raised his hand and stroked her head. In a tone that showed that his heart ached and felt helpless, he asked, "Didn't I say you shouldn't be walking? Ah Luo, why didn't you listen to me?"

# Chapter 57.1

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Wei Luo was startled. She wasn't sure what to say.

She looked at Zhao Jie with a confused expression. She hadn't been thinking when she came here. She had only wanted to vent anger for Chang Hong. She had been so angry that she couldn't pay attention to the injury on her ankle. But, now there was someone in front of her who was attentively worrying about her injury. She felt somewhat moved. She inhaled once before calling out, "Big brother..."

Zhao Jie quietly said, "En."

The young girl's eyes were red. He thought that she was in pain because of her ankle and was about to carry her. Who would have expected that she would spread her arms and murmur, "Hug me?"

Zhao Jie's heart suddenly softened. His desire to pamper her couldn't be increased any further. He said, "Okay." He leaned over and hugged her close to his chest. One hand was around her waist and the other hand was on her head. He tightly pressed her against his chest.

It was only a small request. How could he refuse? Besides, he had long wanted to hug her.

The young girl's body was fragrant and soft. She curled up in his embrace as if she had missed him. Her posture showed absolute dependence. At this moment, Zhao Jie thought she understood his thoughts and even desired him the same way he desired her. But, a short moment later, the lovable body in his arms moved and left his arms. She stood in front of him with a smile as if nothing was wrong and said, "I'm okay now. I drained enough energy."

His arms were suddenly empty, only her scent and a little bit of her warmth were left. Zhao Jie's heart felt regretful, but it wasn't obvious on his face. He thought her banter was interesting, "What

energy? Where did you learn this word from?"

She placed her hand on his shoulder to support half of her weight, "I read this in a book."

Those supernatural books all had similar circumstances. A succubus would absorb a man's energy and the man would immediately die from exhaustion and only his withered corpse would be left. Zhao Jie stroked her head and his eyes darkened. Did she really understand what it meant to drain energy? If she really wanted to drain his energy, a hug wouldn't be sufficient. There were still many things that could be done. In the future, she would know that it wouldn't be something as simple as hugging.

Zhao Jie couldn't bear for her to stand too long. Without speaking, he leaned over, picked her up, and started walking towards his own courtyard on the other side.

Wei Luo conveniently grabbed onto his shoulder, saw that he was heading in the wrong direction, and hurriedly reminded him, "Chang Hong. Big brother, I want to go see Chang Hong."

Zhao Jie paused for a moment before changing directions to walk to Chang Hong's room instead.

On the way there, Wei Luo was lying in his arms and saw him looking straight ahead.

As he slowly walked forward, he asked, "Ah Luo, why do you dislike Li Song?"

Wei Luo looked down and thought of that moment when the hairpin pieced Li Song's chest. Her voice became chilly, "He's always hurting Chang Hong. Chang Hong is my younger brother. No one can hurt him."

From the time she was a child, it seemed that she kept getting entangled with Li Song. Before, it was small-scaled arguments, now that they had grown up, it wouldn't be good if they kept getting entangled. Zhao Jie didn't say anything. When he had been

standing at the entrance, he saw Wei Luo standing on her toes and gently rubbing Li Song's ear. Her action seemed so intimate. For a moment of time, he wanted to kill Li Song. He knew that Wei Luo couldn't like Li Song, but he still couldn't control his possessiveness.

Wei Luo was his. Other than him, no one should even think about touching her.

Wei Luo quietly asked him if he knew what had happened on the hunting grounds today. He nodded, "A servant recently told me about it.

Li Song had injured Wei Chang Hong with an arrow. Fortunately, the arrow hadn't hit a vital point and the injury wasn't life threatening. Zhao Jie thought that matter wasn't as simple as it appeared. Although Li Song bullied Wei Chang Hong when they were children, he didn't have a reason to want to injury Chang Hong at the present and to do in a public place. Under the current circumstance, it would be difficult from Li Song to defend himself even if a hundred voices supported him. Zhao Jie understood Li Song. Although Li Song was arrogant and wild, he wasn't a reckless type of person. There was something off with this story. He needed to investigate this further.

As Zhao Jie walked, he comforted the young girl in his arms, "If something like this happens again, tell me first. This prince will help you resolve it. You don't need to handle it on your own."

They had already arrived at Chang Hong's courtyard during their conversation. He carried her to the reception pavilion at the back of the courtyard. He placed her down on a black lacquered, Chinese cedar chair with an Eight Immortal design.

Wei Luo shrunk back in the chair, "It was hurting before, but it doesn't hurt now..." She tilted her head to look at him. Her bright black eyes glittered and were full of curiosity. "You'll help me with anything? You'll help me no matter what I do?"

Zhao Jie thought her appearance was too cute and couldn't resist smiling. He pinched her small, soft face and said, "I'll help you with anything."

She looked at him with astonishment and amazement. She didn't seem to believe his words.

But he didn't explain further. He stood up and had servant bring a bowl of warm water from the kitchen, then he held her ankle.

Wei Luo's ankle had already been swollen before and because she had walked so much recently, the swelling had worsened. After Zhao Jie placed a hot compress on her ankle for a bit, he rubbed the same medicinal wine he had used last night on her. It was only after this that her pain felt alleviated.

She was preparing to put on her own shoe, but Zhao Jie held her ankle and said, "Don't move around. I'll do it."

But, he had already done everything. To even help her put on her shoe, this didn't seem okay. He was a prince. Was it really okay for him to do this type of thing for her? Wei Luo subconsciously looked at Zhu Geng and wanted him to persuade Zhao Jie. Who would expect that Zhu Geng had already turned his back towards them and was standing at the entrance? He had already become used to this.

Wei Luo held her white sock and stubbornly said, "I'll do it myself..."

Seeing how insistent she was, Zhao Jie smiled, loosened his hold, and said, "Okay."

She bent over to put on her sock and shoe and finally let out a sigh in relief. When she thought about having to walk to Chang Hong's inner room, she immediately realized the next part's difficulty. She couldn't continue walking. How could she get there?

Zhao Jie was in front of her and holding in his smile. Seeing her pink lips pursed, he couldn't resist asking, "Are you going to go



there yourself, or do you want this prince to carry you."

She looked up without saying anything.

Zhao Jie quietly laughed. In the end, he still came closer to pick her up and started walking to Chang Hong's inner room while carrying her.

## Chapter 57.2

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Inside Chang Hong's inner room, the two doctors had already treated Chang Hong's wound. His wound had stopped bleeding, but he wasn't awake. The doctors said that he might have a fever during the night. If that happened, he just needed to drink a bowl of medicine and would be fine when he woke up the next morning.

Liang Yu had been at Chang Hong's bedside and keeping watch this entire time. Seeing Zhao Jie carrying Wei Luo inside, he was stunned for a moment before he cupped one fist in the other to make his salutations, "Greetings your Highness Prince Jing."

Zhao Jie placed Wei Luo down a rosewood chair. After he thought for a moment, in order to protect her reputation, he explained, "Ah Luo's ankle was injured and she can't walk, so this prince carried her over here."

Liang Yu suddenly understood and didn't think any further. He retreated to the side to give his spot to Wei Luo.

Wei Luo looked at Chang Hong, who was lying in bed, and felt a pang of sadness. She couldn't help reaching out and holding his hand. He had been perfectly okay yesterday night when he stood in front of her and complained about Zhao Jie. Who would have expected that in a single day he would become like this? She tilted her head to childishly wipe away her tears on her sleeve. It was if she was a completely different person from the girl that had used a hairpin to hurt someone.

At nighttime, as predicted, Chang Hong became feverish and his entire body sweated and his mouth said nonsensical words. Wei Luo was extremely worried and hurriedly had the servants prepare the medicine. She wasn't reassured until she personally saw him drink down the medicine.

Fortunately, he was much better after he finished drinking the medicine. He continued sleeping until the next morning.

This had been a night of unbearable torment for Wei Luo. She hadn't closed her eyes even once the entire night and closely kept watch over Chang Hong by his bedside. She was afraid that something would happen to him. Zhao Jie had been next to her and keeping her company. He asked her to go back to her room several times to rest, but she stubbornly shook her head and wouldn't leave no matter what he said. She lasted until the first glimmer of dawn covered the mountain before she finally fell asleep on the bed.

Zhao Jie walked closer, picked her up, looked at Chang Hong who had awoken, and calmly said, "Properly recuperate from your injury. This prince will take Ah Luo away first." Before he left, he also said, "The doctors said that you shouldn't be moving since you're injured. Wait until the next morning. This prince will arrange for people to bring the two of you back to your residence."

Chang Hong lied in his bed. His handsome face was deathly pale as he looked at Zhao Jie's back as he carried Ah Luo away. He didn't look away for a long time.

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The winner of this year's hunting competition was Liang Yu. Li Song was in second place. Third place went to another imperial official's son. This had been reported to the Emperor yesterday.

After the hunting competition was over, one after another, people left Jing He Villa and returned home. Wei Chang Hong and Wei Luo were the only ones that stayed for an extra day.

Li Song didn't stay any longer. He went back Prince Ru Yang's residence while he was still wounded.

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At Prince Ru Yang's antechamber, Prince Ru Yang and Elder Princess Gao Yang found out that Li Song had been injured. They were appalled and distressed.

Elder Princess Gao Yang was deeply worried when she asked, "You've never been hurt in previous years. What happened this year? Who hurt you?"

Li Song sat in a chair while tightly gripping the armrest and refusing to answer.

Elder Princess Gao Yang could only turn around to ask Li Song's attendant. Li Song's attendant started to speak, but then paused. When he had just opened his mouth to speak, Li Song had fiercely glared at him, so he immediately stopped.

Li Song looked down and slowly said, “ No one hurt me... The injury was caused by my own carelessness.”

## Chapter 58.1

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He had been too careless. How could he have such idiotic and absurd thoughts in spite of everything?

When Wei Luo had whispered into his ears "because you like me", he had lost his ability to think rationally. From last night to today, her sweet smile had lingered in his memory. This had been the first time that she smiled at him, but she had wanted to use her hairpin to kill him. The sharp blade had pierced his chest. He was filled with hate for her, but in the end, he still let her go.

Li Song tightly held the wooden armrest. The blue veins on the back of his hand were bursting out and he almost broke the wood into pieces.

He had repeatedly been absent-minded during this conversation. Even Elder Princess Gao Yang had seen that his behavior was unusual. After calling his name a few times, she asked, "Song-er, what are you thinking about? I asked you how did you get injured. Why won't you answer me?"

Li Song's injury was on his chest. As long as it was bandaged, no one would be able to tell how he was injured or how badly he was injured. He quietly said, "I was injured by an animal during the hunting competition. It's only a small injury. Don't be worried, mother."

Elder Princess Gao Yang looked at him skeptically and worriedly asked, "Is it really not serious? Your face doesn't look good."

He shook head and said it wasn't serious. Taking advantage of the fact that they weren't too suspicious yet, he endured the pain, and changed the topic, "Where's Xiang-er? Why isn't she here to see me?"

Elder Princess Gao Yang said, "She shut herself in her room since she returned from Xun Mountain. I knocked on her door several

times, but she still won't come out." Her eyebrows furrowed in the end as she said in displeasure, "I don't know what that girl is thinking.

What could she be thinking? It could only be that she had injured a person, felt guilty, but was worried that her parents would punish her, and was afraid to see anyone.

Li Song had always loved Li Xiang dearly and couldn't bear to see her suffer the slightest grievance. However, he thought that she had gone too far this time. Because her family had always spoiled her, she had grown up to have an arrogant and unruly temperament. Even if Wei Luo had framed her, she still shouldn't have tried to kill Wei Chang Hong.

Li Song thought for a moment before telling the past two days of events to Prince Ru Yang (Li Zhi Liang) and Elder Princess Gao Yang (Zhao Xuan). His voice was mild as he spoke, but Li Zhi Liang and Zhao Xuan's eyes became wider and wider. In the end, she asked in an incredulous tone, ".... House Wei's sixth young master's injury was caused by Xiang-er?"

Li Song nodded.

Elder Princess Gao Yang was utterly shocked. If she hadn't heard this from Li Song, she wouldn't have believed this no matter what. Her daughter that she had raised in the palm of her hand was usually pure and cute. How could she do such a vicious thing? She murmured, "How could Xiang-er do such a thing? She... She..."

Elder Princess Gao Yang kept saying "She..." for a long time, but in the end, she couldn't finish her sentence.

Fortunately, Li Zhi Liang's mind was clear. He held his wife that was on the verge of collapsing and said to the servant girl outside, "Ask Miss to come here!"

Soon after, Li Xiang appeared in front of the door. She was wearing a white silk top and an olive green crepe skirt. For the

most part, Li Xiang had already guessed the reason she was told to come here. There wasn't the slightest amount of fear or guilt on her face. Instead, there was only a smile. She arrived in front of Elder Princess Gao Yang and asked a question while already knowing the answer, "Mother, why did call me here? I already said I wasn't feeling well."

Elder Princess Gao Yang settled her mind. She sat in her beech chair and tried to calmly ask, "Xiang-er, tell me the truth. Did you have something to do with Wei Chang Hong's injury?"

The smile on Li Xiang's face froze. She immediately looked at Li Song, "Did older brother tell you?"

Elder Princess Gao Yang's voice became stricter, "Just tell me yes or no!"

Contrary to expectations, Li Xiang was very candid. Her eyebrows were raised and with a demeanor of willing to accept the consequences of her actions, she said, "I was the one who shot him. Does it matter?"

Li Xiang had injured someone. Instead of having a regretful heart, she acted as if what she had done was right. Her action made Elder Princess Gao Yang feel angry and disappointed, "How could you..." As she said these words, she felt her vision go black. She had to calm down for a long time before she recovered her senses. She had heard about Li Xiang and Wei Luo's dispute. The matter wasn't too big or too small. At most, their families wouldn't be joined together by marriage. But now the matter was completely different. Li Xiang had injured Chang Hong. Not only had they offended House Wei, if the matter became public, this would greatly damage Li Xiang's reputation and would make it difficult for her to get married! How could this child be so foolish?

Seeing that Zhao Xuan's face didn't look right, Li Xiang immediately went forward to support her, considerately poured her a cup of tea, and brought the tea to her. "Mother, don't be

angry. I heard people say that Wei Chang Hong is okay now. He was only injured a little bit. Who doesn't get hurt during hunting?" After saying this, she looked at Li Song, "Besides, older brother will take responsibility for me. What do I have to worry about?"

Li Song didn't reply and turned his face away from her.

Li Xiang didn't think further of his action. She continued saying words to coax Elder Princess Gao Yang. She was born with a clever mouth. As long as she wanted, she would be able to put someone at ease. In addition, Zhao Xuan had always loved her dearly. Even if Zhao Xuan was angry, she wouldn't give Li Xiang to House Wei to punish. As she placated Zhao Xuan, she logically explained her reasoning, "I didn't like Wei Chang Hong to begin with. It's daddy and mommy that insisted on matching us together. The relationship between our two families isn't good and Wei Luo is sinister and cunning. If I marry into their family, wouldn't I only be waiting to be suffer grievances? Is daddy and mommy willing for me to be bullied by their family every day? Isn't the current situation better now? This marriage doesn't need to happen anymore..."

Although Wei Chang Hong was older than her by a year, she considered him beneath her notice.

She liked valiant Liang Yu instead of a wimpy kid that followed his older sister every day. Wei Chang Hong's eyes only had his older sister. The woman that married him would have to compete with this sister-in-law for his affection. That would truly be a lifetime of bad luck.

Elder Princess Gao Yang pointed at her, "So you injured him because of this? How do you want other people to describe you? Shrewish and malicious? Or cruel and brutal? Do you still want your reputation?"

Li Xiang acted spoiled by lying down and rubbing against her leg. "Mommy, I know I was wrong... It's Wei Luo's fault for scheming



against me. I only did it because I was too angry at the time, so I didn't control myself." In the end, she didn't dare to say how Wei Luo had schemed against her and could only ambiguously conceal it. "Besides, I have older brother. Older brother, how did you resolve the matter?"

Li Song didn't answer her. The injury in his chest was too deep. Yesterday, he had only wrapped up the injury with bandages on Xun Mountain. Now, the injury ached terribly. He clenched his fist, held in his pain, and said, "I'm tired. I'm leaving first to go to my room to rest for a bit."

After he said, he didn't wait for their response. He turned around and left.

Li Xiang froze for a moment. She thought that he was only in a bad mood. She caught up with him and called out, "Older brother!"

Li Song didn't stop his steps. Every step was extremely slow.

Li Xiang finally caught up to him at a vermillion-lacquered verandah. She walked in front of him and anxiously asked, "Older brother, are you mad at me..."

Before she finished her words, she saw blood coming out of his chest. She froze for a moment. Her eyes opened wider as she asked, "You're injured? When did you get injured? Weren't you still fine when the hunting competition ended..." She suddenly thought of something. She angrily looked up and asked, "Was it Wei Chang Hong? Or was it Wei Luo? Did they do this?"

Li Song only felt distraught with anxiety. He had a headache on top of his injury aching, so his face didn't look good. His tone was harsh as he said, "Li Xiang, I shouldered the blame for your actions yesterday. If you continue to be so willful in the future, I won't help you next time." He clutched his chest, pushed away Li Xiang, and hoarsely said, "During this time, obediently stay at home. Don't show your face in public until people stop discussing this matter."

Li Xiang stood in place and watched his back as he walked further away. Unable to restrain her emotions, she gritted her teeth. Who knew if she had listened to him words and whether or not she would follow them?

Elder Princess Gao Yang loved her daughter too much and also hearing that Li Xiang knew that she was wrong, so she couldn't bear to punish Li Xiang harshly. In the end, she only punished Li Xiang with kneeling in front of Buddha for six hours and copying scriptures a hundred times before counting the matter as settled. As for the marriage with House Wei, it definitely wouldn't be able to happen. Not only would the marriage not happen, she was afraid that their resentment would be difficult to resolve.

## Chapter 58.2

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At Duke Ying's residence, Wei Chang Hong didn't fully recover from his injury until half a month later.

During this time, Wei Luo was always nearby to watch over him. She had searched and collected various kinds of expensive medicine for him and wouldn't feel assured until she watched him drink a large bowl of medicine every day. Sometimes, Wei Chang Hong felt very helpless and tried to struggle against this, "Ah Luo, I'm not as delicate as you. My injury had healed a long time ago. Could I stop drinking these tonics?"

Wei Luo shook her head and rather unreasonably said, "You can't even defeat Li Song. When you can beat Li Song, you won't have to continue drinking these tonics."

Li Song had practiced martial arts since he was a child. Wei Chang had only learned some boxing to strengthen his body and health. Their abilities couldn't be compared. Her condition was too unreasonable. Wei Chang Hong didn't have any other methods and could only continue drinking the tonics.

Today, Zhao Liuli had invited Wei Luo to the palace because she had something she wanted to discuss with Wei Luo. So, Wei Luo let Chang Hong off for today. She returned to her room, changed her clothes, and went to the palace.

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At the same time, Emperor Chong Zhen had arranged a banquet at Lin De Hall and had invited the top three winners for the hunting competition to confer their rewards to them. A few princes and the sons of imperial officials would also be at the banquet. Zhao Jie and Zhao Zhang were also on the invitation list.

Zhao Jie hadn't officially participated in this year's hunting competition. Zhao Jie had only taken this chance to join in the

festivity. After all, this type of competition was Emperor Chong Zheng's method of testing the young men's abilities. It wasn't a grand and solemn occasion. There wasn't a reason for the princes to show off their strengths and steal someone else's opportunity. Originally, Zhao Jie had wanted to hunt a small fox for Wei Luo, but since that girl didn't seem interested, he could only drop the subject.

At the banquet, Emperor Chong Zhen was wearing a purple, imperial ceremonial robe and a yi shan guan (a type of Ming Dynasty crown). His smile was good-natured as he allowed everyone to sit down. Zhao Jie and Zhao Zhang sat on his left and right side.

Zhao Jie was wearing an inky grey robe with golden edges and a pattern of dragons that hadn't yet grown horns. His bearing was noble.

Zhao Zhang was seven or eight years younger than him. He was wearing a dark blue robe with a python pattern and cupping his hands in greeting. His smile was amiable and meek, but his face didn't show fear.

Liang Yu was sitting below Zhao Jie. Li Song was sitting below Zhao Zhang. The other official's son sat next to Liang Yu. The other people were sitting respectively on the left and right side of the hall.

During the banquet, Emperor Chong Zhen had heavily praised Liang Yu and the other two winners. He praised them as young men who had outstanding talent, bravery, and strategic ability. His words were very appreciative.

Liang Yu modestly stood up at once and felt somewhat embarrassed hearing these words. However, Emperor Chen didn't have the same impression. He ordered the palace servants to bring out the rewards that had been prepared in advance to bestow to these three people.

The three people kneeled down, accepted the reward, and sat down in their seats again.

The reward ceremony was followed by drinking and watching the dancers.

The dancers wore rainbow colored clothing. They swayed and whirled their bodies to the sound of the music. Their movements and postures were graceful. Most people couldn't turn their eyes away from them.

Zhao Jie lowered his eyes. With waning interest, he poured a cup of wine for himself and lifted up the ceramic wine cup. He raised his eyes to look at Li Song, who was sitting on the other side.

The injury on Li Song's chest wasn't healed, so he couldn't drink wine. He had seemed absent-minded since the banquet started and was supporting his chin with his hand. At the moment, everyone was appreciatively watching the colorfully dressed dancers. Although his eyes were looking at the dancers, who knew where his consciousness had disappeared?

Zhao Jie called to a palace servant and whispered a few words to him. The servant nodded, quickly and quietly appeared behind Li Song, and said a few words into his ear.

After Li Song heard these words, Li Song looked at Zhao Jie gloomily.

Zhao Jie raised his wine cup. His thin lips held his smile. He raised his head, drank the cup in one gulp, and placed the cup down on the table upside down to indicate, "I finished. Do as you wish."

Li Song's eyes deepened. He could only pour a cup of wine for himself, toast Zhao Jie, raise his head, and finish the cup in one gulp.

Li Song had thought this would be done after one cup. Who would have expected that Zhao Jie would deliberately torment him? One

cup wasn't enough. There was a second cup, then a third cup... When he had drunk the seventh cup, it felt as if the injury on his chest had split opened. His heart felt a burning pain. But when he saw that Zhao Jie didn't have the intention to stop, he could only endure his pain and accompany him in drinking. The two of them were fired up and vowed to not give up until the other person fell over.

Unfortunately for Li Song, his tolerance for alcohol wasn't as good as Zhao Jie's. As each cup of wine went down, Zhao Jie's face didn't change the slightest amount. Instead, his face became increasingly composed. As for Li Song, the scene in front of him was already somewhat hazy. There was suddenly a sweet-smell in his throat, but he endured it and swallowed it down. He diligently drunk another cup and firmly placed the cup down on the black lacquered table inlaid with gold!

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The banquet ended. Everyone returned to their own residences.

Zhao Jie's steps were steady. Other than his body smelling of wine, he didn't seem like a person that recently drank twenty something cups of wine. He nonchalantly said his goodbyes to everyone, walked down the steps near the throne, and departed through Xuan De Palace's entrance.

On the contrary, Li Song's eyes were red and his gait was careless. With the help of a palace servant, he was barely able to walk out of Lin De Hall. By the time he walked outside to Xuan De Palace's entrance and felt the cold wind, he felt somewhat sober.

Coincidentally, a bluish-green covered carriage arrived and stopped at the Xuan De Palace's doorway. One of Wei Luo's hand held her skirt decorated with a hundred golden butterflies and flowers and her other hand held Jin Lu as she came out of the carriage. When she first looked up, she met Zhao Jie's line of sight. Her pink lips started to curve up to show a smile. As her line of

sight changed, she saw Li Song behind him and the corners of her lips immediately hanged down. She looked away. She didn't want to see him.

Zhao Jie smiled. He reached her in a few steps. He stroked the top of her head and asked, "Why did you come to the palace? Is Liuli looking for you?"

Wei Luo nodded and plainly said, "Liuli said there was something she wanted to discuss with me and wanted me to come visit her." As she said this, she smelled the alcohol on his body. She retreated half a step and held her nose. "Did big brother drink wine? The smell is so strong."

Not only had he drunk, he had drunk a lot.

Zhao Jie couldn't smell it himself, but he saw the young girl's face of distaste. He couldn't resist teasing her, "What? You don't like it when this prince drinks?"

Far from the question of like or dislike, it was only that she wasn't used to the smell. She put down hand that was holding her nose, "If I say I don't like it?"

He curved his lips, looked at her eyes, and said half in jest and half in earnest, "Then, I won't drink wine anymore."

Wei Luo blinked and didn't say anything.

Behind Zhao Jie, Li Song looked away from them, took the reins that a palace servant handed to him, mounted the horse, raised the horsewhip, urged the horse forward, and left without looking back.

# Chapter 59.1

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The man and horse gradually faded away into the distance. Wei Luo turned around to look in that direction. The haze in her eyes became heavier and heavier. It seemed that she hadn't stabbed the hairpin deep enough. Otherwise, how would Li Song be able to participate in the banquet and drink wine? Chang Hong was still lying in bed right now, but Li Song didn't even have a problem riding a horse!

If he hadn't already gone so far away, Wei Luo really wanted to walk forward and stab him again.

As she continued looking in that direction, the sight in front of her suddenly turned black. Her line of sight was completely blocked by a black cloak embroidered with gold thread. She was surprised for a moment, then she looked up, and lightly pushed the cloak. Her head came out from inside the cloak and she looked at Zhao Jie in astonishment, "Big brother?"

The corners of Zhao Jie's lips were slightly curved up. He leaned over and tied the cloak's silk waistband for her. With a faint smile, he said, "It's cold today. Wear this cloak so that you won't get a cold."

He knew what she had just been looking at, but he didn't say it. His heart felt annoyed, but his face didn't reveal this. Instead, he decided to take off his cloak to give to her and block her line of sight. His possessiveness towards Wei Luo grew with each passing day. He couldn't tolerate her looking at other men. She was only allowed to look at him.

As expected, he successfully distracted Wei Luo. She forgot about Li Song and waited until he finished fastening the cloak before saying, "But I'm not cold..."

Zhao Jie stroke her head and wouldn't allow her to refuse, "I'm worried that you'll be cold."



She could only wear the cloak and thanked him. Seeing that it wasn't early, she parted with him at the palace's entrance. She turned around, entered the palace, and walked towards Qing Xi Palace's Chen Hua Hall.

Just as she arrived at Chen Hua's Hall's entrance, she took off Zhao Jie's cloak. She didn't do this because she disliked Zhao Jie, but because she wanted to avoid Liuli's questions if she saw her wearing the cloak. She didn't want to waste her energy explaining. It would be better if Liuli didn't know about this to begin with. Besides, the hall wasn't cold. It would be a hindrance to wear the cloak, so taking it off would be more comfortable.

She walked inside the hall. After walking around the place, she couldn't find Zhao Liuli, so she could only ask one of the palace servant girls, "Where's Princess Tianji?"

The palace servant girl said, "To respond to Miss, her Highness went with Bodyguard Yang to the back garden to go fishing."

She continued asking, "When will she come back?"

The palace servant girl shook her head, "This servant doesn't know either. Miss, please wait here for a bit. This servant will bring you a cup of tea."

Wei Luo could only sit in the hall and wait. Not much later, she heard Zhao Liuli's crisp voice from outside the hall. She put down her cup that was decorated with brightly colored lotus flowers, stood up, walked out of the hall, and looked at the verandah on the other side.

When she saw the scene, she froze for a moment.

Yang Zhen was carrying Zhao Liuli on his back and walking over here. There was a faint smile on the normally cold and taciturn young man's face. His eyes were gentle and pampering. Zhao Liuli was lying on his back and both of her arms were around his neck. She was talking close to his ears. Wei Luo didn't know what they

were saying, but Liuli's laughter was beautifully sweet. Even from far away, Wei Luo could feel the happiness in Liuli's sound.

These... These two people...

Wei Luo was stumped for words as she stood there. She thought this scene was too unusual. The intimacy between the two of them was overly excessive. Or, was she overthinking? Was it normal for a princess and her bodyguard to get along like this? She stood at Chen Hua Hall's entrance and turned her head to look the palace servant girls that were nearby. She discovered that everyone's heads were bowed down in mutual understanding and pretending that they didn't see anything. It seemed that they had already become accustomed to this.

Yang Zhen carried Zhao Liuli to Wei Luo. His dark eyes calmly looked at her for moment. Soon after, he carefully placed Zhao Liuli on the ground and warned her, "House Wei's fourth miss is here. Your Highness, you should go inside."

After Zhao Liuli was standing firm, she went forward to hold Wei Luo's hand and didn't seem to notice Wei Luo's strangeness. She walked inside to Chen Hua Hall in high spirits. "Ah Luo, when did you come here? Why weren't you waiting inside the hall? It's windy today. What if you catch a cold from the windy weather?"

Wei Luo followed behind her with a strange expression. After a long time, she slowly asked, "It's windy outside. And you still went outside with Yang Zhen?"

Zhao Liuli pointed at her cashmere overcoat to indicate that she was dressed warmly and wasn't afraid of the wind. In addition, there was the warmth from Chen Hua Hall's heater. She took off her overcoat and hanged it on a wooden folding screen that was inlaid with numerous gemstones on the edges. She explained with a smile, "Older brother Yang Zhen said he would take me to fly a kite. It has to be windy to fly a kite."

So they were in the back garden flying a kite?

Wei Luo thought for a moment. The imperial doctors all said that Liuli should go outside to walk around more. It would be good for her health to occasionally go outside to fly a kite as long as it wasn't too intense. But... Wei Luo glanced at her and tried to feel her out, "Are you injured? Why did you have Yang Zhen carry you on his back?"

Liuli sat on the rosewood arhat couch. She took the lotus pattern cup that a palace servant girl handed her and took a sip. She blinked and said, "I'm not injured... but I was tired, so I had older brother Yang Zhen carry me back on his back."

“...”

Wei Luo really didn't know what to say. Liuli's relationship with Yang Zhen was special to begin with and now she had done such an intimate action. Wasn't she intentionally letting people misunderstand? Wei Luo held her hand that had been placed on the table engraved with lions, hesitated for a moment, deliberated her tone and said, "Liuli, you're already fourteen years old this year..."

Wei Luo was clearly only thirteen years old and her little face was youthful, but she used a tone of voice that sounded like an experienced person when she said these words. It made a person feel strange. Zhao Liuli carefully looked over her face. Seeing that Wei Luo wasn't joking, she turned her head and made a gesture for the palace servant girls to leave the room. "Ah Luo, I have something I want to tell you."

Soon, they were the only two people left in the warm room.

Wei Luo suddenly remembered something. Zhao Liuli had invited her to palace because she wanted to discuss something with her. Liuli's following words were probably about that. She suddenly had a bad feeling that her guess about Yang Zhen would come true.

Zhao Liuli's following words would definitely be an extremely

serious major event.

As expected, Zhao Liuli repeatedly hesitated with speaking. Her small delicate face twisted more and more. Finally, she mustered up her courage and said, "I think I like older brother Yang Zhen."

Her guess was confirmed. Wei Luo immediately deflated. She involuntarily tightened her hold on the cup in front of her and couldn't say a single word.

How can Zhao Liuli like Yang Zhen? Their statuses were vastly different. One was a young princess that was held in the palm of Empress Chen's hand and heart. The other was only an insignificant imperial bodyguard. How could there be a good outcome? She should have guessed from her previous words. If they only had a normal relationship, how could their actions be so intimate... If Zhao Jie knew this, what would he think and do?

Wei Luo's thoughts turned a thousand times. She couldn't think of what to say.

Zhao Liuli continued, "Older brother Yang Zhen treats me very well. He's protected me since I was child. Whatever I want, he'll think of a way to get it for me..."

Wei Luo mulled over the issue and finally found her voice, "Liuli, you're just too lonely. You only had Yang Zhen by your side since childhood, so you think he's good. There's a large disparity between the two of you. There won't be a happy ending..."

Zhao Liuli stubbornly shook her head. The emotion in her eyes was sincere. "It's not. Ah Luo, don't say that. I truly like older brother Yang Zhen. Even if there are other people by my side, I'll still like him." She had thought about this for a long time. Although she was simple, she still considered the things that she should consider. This time, she had invited Wei Luo into the palace to tell her this. They were as close as sisters, so she didn't want to hide this from her. "When the time arrives, I'll tell imperial mother. She loves me so much. She'll definitely agree..."

Wei Luo looked at her eyes and was suddenly unable to bear saying words of rebuttal.

Sickly since childhood, Liuli hadn't obtained much and had lost many things. Now, she finally had a person that she liked. It was probably a difficult thing.

Wei Luo lowered her eyes. Soon after, she curved her lips in a smile, and looked up to say, "How good is Yang Zhen treating you? For you to like him so much?"

At the mention of this, Zhao Liuli's beautiful eyes seemed to glow. She held up her cheeks in her hands and carefully enumerated, "Older brother Yang Zhen remembers what I like to eat and every time we leave the place, he'll buy those foods for me. Whenever I meet with danger, he'll be the first person in front of me to block me from danger. He gives me presents. And he's very attentive towards me... One time, I twisted my ankle. He was more worried about it than me. He personally applied the medicine on my ankle..."

The more that Zhao Liuli spoke, the more that she had to say. But, Wei Luo became quieter and quieter.

When Liuli talked about this, Wei Luo couldn't help thinking about that other person... Zhao Jie would also remember her favorite foods and give her presents. That time when they went to Rong Chun Fang to listen to that musical, he was the first person to stand in front of her to block that out-of-control carriage. He tightly held her in his arms. Oh. When they were recently at Jing He Villa, when she twisted on her ankle, he was the one who carried her to her room and personally applied medicine for her.

Zhao Liuli had talked a lot, but she didn't receive Wei Luo's response. She couldn't resist stretching her hand out and waving it in front of Wei Luo. "Ah Luo, are you listening?"

Wei Luo suddenly returned to her sense. She nodded and said, "I'm listening."

Zhao Liuli curved her eyes and smiled. She asked with perfect contentment, "Do you think older brother Yang Zhen treats me well?"

She paused for a moment, then she slowly nodded, "... Well."

## Chapter 59.2

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After Li Song left the palace, he didn't go home. Instead, he invited a few friends to Ping Kang neighborhood's red-light district and decided to drink away his worries.

These friends were just lounge lizards and lackeys that liked to stir up trouble. They were ignorant and incompetent. But, they all followed Li Song's orders. Now that Li Song told them to come out, they were naturally happy to do so. A short while later, five or six people were gathered together. They requested a private room in Bao Gui, ordered a few women to accompany them, and started their drinking party.

Li Song sat in the top seat. He had already drunk a lot in the palace, but when the wine was brought to him, he focused only on drinking and ignored everyone else.

Next to Li Song, a young noble wearing a blue robe gestured at a young woman. The young woman tacitly understood. Like a snake, she pressed her soft body against Li Song, "Sir Li, it's so boring to drink by yourself. How about letting this servant accompany you?"

Li Song's movement in pouring wine didn't stop. He raised his head and finished another cup. He didn't agree or refuse. It was as if he didn't hear her words.

That young woman had great eyesight and the ability to make discerning judgments. She immediately took the wine cup from his hand. After the wine cup was full, she brought the white jade wine cup to his mouth.

He paused for a moment. He didn't refuse and drunk from the wine cup held by the young woman.

Her strong fragrance lingered around him as if he had placed himself in a cluster of flowers. He wasn't used to the strong smell. He thought of Wei Luo's light and sweet fragrance that was

completely different from this young woman's. Why was thinking about her? Hadn't he already drunk a lot? Why was he still thinking about her?

The blue-robed young noble saw that Li Song was lost in thought and couldn't resist asking with a smile, "Ah Song, didn't you win second place in the hunting competition? You must have received a reward from His Majesty, right? Why do you look so disappointed? Was there something unsatisfactory?"

He lowered his eyes and stared at the liquid in his wine cup. The liquid was sparkling and translucent. He swirled it around and looked at the ripples. A blurry, pretty, and lively face suddenly appeared on the surface of the liquid. That smiling face softly and warmly asked, "Li Song, do you like me?"

"I don't..." He closed his eyes and painfully repeated, "I don't."

How could he like her? He loathed her. She was a cunning and treacherous person with malevolent heart. He couldn't like her!

But that voice kept repeating itself in his ear as if it was magician's spell that he couldn't break free from. He could only drink cup after cup of wine to numb himself until he stopped hearing Wei Luo's voice.

A seductive and lovable body suddenly crashed into him and curled up in his arms. A soft hand restlessly fondled his chest and gradually moved up to his Adam's apple, chin, mouth... He frowned and fiercely grabbed that hand, "Don't move."

The young woman was wearing a pink peach jacket and skirt. She delicately laughed and didn't treat his words seriously. She took this opportunity to move her mouth to gently bite his ear and blew into it, "Sir Li, you're joking. Who comes here and doesn't do anything?" As she said, she took his other hand and placed it on her waist.

However, in the next moment, he pushed her away and furiously



shouted, "Leave!"

She didn't know if it was that sentence had provoked him. He covered his ear and his eyes were red. He lifted his foot and kicked over the small vermillion lacquered sandalwood table. The items on the table crashed onto the floor! He continued to angrily berate her, "All of you leave! Get lost!"

Everyone was shocked by his action. One after another, they retreated towards the door. They didn't know what kind of drunken fit he was having.

The young women had already left through the door. The lounge lizards didn't dare to go forward to persuade him and only looked at each other in dismay. In the end, one by one, they left.

After everyone had left, Li Song's body collapsed. With a loud bang, he fell onto the ground. He was drunk and his mind was unclear, but he still clutched his left ear. He curled up and continuously repeated, "I don't. I don't."

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Although Empress Chen was angry with Zhao Jie on the surface, she was still worried about him in her heart. He still didn't want to marry at this age. As his mother, she would naturally be worried. In addition, she had recently heard that catamites were popular in the capital. Those with power and status all liked to keep one or two catamites in their residences to satisfy their different tastes. Although Empress Chen understood her son's personal character, she was still a bit worried. After pondering over this for a long time, she finally couldn't resist arranging two young women to send over to Prince Jing's residence.

These two young and beautiful women were both from palace dancer origins and clean backgrounds. Empress Chen thought that if Zhao Jie liked them, they could remain in his residence as concubines.

Towards evening, Zhao Jie finished handling his affairs. He left his study to go to his bedroom. After washing his face and rinsing his mouth, he was about to change clothes and go to sleep. Just as he sat down on his cedar bed that was carved with clouds, he saw two young women coming out from behind his divider screen. One was graceful and subdued. The other one was charming and flirtatious.

He paused in his movement and looked at the two of them.

The two of them curtsied and saluted. The two young women's petal-like cheeks were blushing. The translucent clothing they were wearing couldn't cover the landscape of their chests. Their white jade flesh was partially hidden and partially visible. They said, "Your Highness, we'll be helping you go to bed in the future..."

Zhao Jie's gaze quickly cooled. He didn't move and his voice was so low that it was scary, "Who allowed the two of you to enter?"

# Chapter 60.1

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The two young women looked at each other. They hadn't expected that his response would be so cold.

One of the two beautiful young women that were wearing peach pink robes went forward with a smile. She said with a soft and velvety voice, "To respond to His Highness, it was Her Majesty Empress Chen that ordered us to serve you. I'm called Liu Jiang. She's called Ye Mei. We're both dancers that were trained by Her Majesty Empress Chen's Mama Qiu..."

After she finished speaking, she didn't see Zhao Jie showing any response.

Liu Jiang brazenly lifted her head up to look at him. The room lit by candlelight was dim. She could only clearly see his silhouette with effort. His face was handsome and his dark and deep eyes didn't show a trace of emotion, but it made a person sink into captivation. When she looked down, his shoulders were broad, his hands were powerful, and his two long legs were right in front of her... If a man like this could love her, she would be indescribably happy. Even if it were only one night, she would still be perfectly happy.

Before Liu Jiang had time to take back her line of sight, she heard a cold and cruel voice come from the bed, "Did you see enough?"

She suddenly stiffened and quickly bowed down to acknowledge her mistake, "Your Highness, please forgive me. Liu Jiang was rude..."

Before the words were finished, Zhao Jie expressionlessly interrupted her, "Leave. Regardless of who had you come here, wherever you came from, go back there."

Liu Jiang's face paled. She anxiously asked, "Has Liu Jiang angered Your Highness? If Your Highness is displeased, then please

punished Liu Jiang instead..."

On the side, Ye Mei saw that Zhao Jie's expression had become colder and immediately stopped Liu Jiang's words. She was barely able to force her a smile on her face as she explained, "Your Highness, please calm down. Liu Jiang's nature is outspoken. If she has angered Your Highness, please be magnanimous and forgive her. Please don't lower yourself to her level..."

She paused and earnestly said, "The Empress had ordered us to serve Your Highness. If Your Highness drives us away on the first day, the Empress will definitely think we were thoughtless in serving you and will severely punish us..."

Zhao Jie's sleepiness had vanished like smoke in air after being disturbed by these two people. His mood was very irritable. Hearing her words, he raised his eyebrows and said, "How is that related to this prince?"

Ye Mei's speech was blocked. She lifted her head up to look at him in astonishment. She probably hadn't expected that he would be such a cold person.

Zhao Jie wasn't in the mood to deal with them. He called for Zhu Geng and asked with an unhappy face, "Who allowed these two to enter the residence? And who arranged for them to enter this prince's room?"

Zhu Geng glanced at the two young women on the ground whose flower-like countenances were turning pale. He bowed, cupped one fist in the other hand, and said, "To respond to the prince, it was this residence's head steward, Lu Sheng Ping."

Prince Jing's residence had two stewards. One was head steward, Lu Sheng Ping. The other steward was Xu Tian Ning. Lu Sheng Ping was a person that knew how to pander and flatter and was dependable with his work. He had stably held the head steward position for three years. Today, he had allowed these two young women to enter here. Originally, he had thought that this would

make Zhao Jie happy with him. He hadn't expected that not only had his boot-licking failed and hadn't made Zhao Jie happy, he had touched Zhao Jie's explosive point.

Zhao Jie furrowed his eyebrows and said, "He shouldn't have acted without the consent of his superior. Punished him with half a year of salary and drive him out of the residence.

Zhu Geng nodded and vocally acknowledged his command.

Hearing this, Liu Jiang and Ye Mei felt more terrified. He was punishing even the steward. It seemed that His Highness Prince Jing was really unhappy... What would happen to them? Would they really be driven out of here and back to the palace?

As expected, Zhao Jie looked at them, gestured with one hand, and simply said, "As for the two of you... do you want to go back yourself or do you want this prince to drive you out?"

They looked at each other and made the discerning judgment to kowtow, then they said, "Thank you for being merciful Your Highness... We'll leave on our own."

The two of them immediately left the bedroom while supporting each other. They didn't dare to have any further unrealistic fantasy about him.

Zhu Geng followed them in retreating. The room was finally peaceful and quiet, but Zhao Jie wasn't sleepy anymore.

He was resting his head on a pillow embroidered with golden thread. One hand was behind his head. The other hand was on his stomach. In the dark room, his phoenix eyes were especially dark and deep. Who knew what he was thinking? He slowly closed his eyes. He felt as if he was in the middle of an icy cold stream. The stream gently and slowly flowed over him. The tactile sensation was wet and slippery as if were a young woman's soft hand.

The imaged changed. He was lying on Wu Jiang's vast and boundless prairie. Behind him, there was a battlefield with two

powerful armies. He could clearly hear the fighting on the battlefield. His nose could even smell the scent of blood. However, there was a lovable and delicate girl sitting on him. The girl's appearance was exquisite. Her skin was as white as snow and ice. Her hands that were so soft it seemed boneless was placed on his chest. They constantly teased his heart.

Zhao Jie's body gradually became heavy. The war behind him and the girl on top of him had stimulated the blood hidden in his body. His fiery hands held the girl's slender waist and firmly pressed her body down on his. He wished that he could crush her into his arms. The girl's lovable voice called out once and her body fell onto his body. Her arms went around his neck and she whispered into his ear in a cutely spoiled way, "Big brother, it hurts..."

Zhao Jie abruptly opened his eyes. There was only darkness in front of him.

The sky hadn't brightened yet. The night's colors were still strong.

The night was silent. There was only the sound of his breathing becoming heavier and heavier.

In the end, that cutely spoiled voice hovered near his ear and didn't dissipate for a long time. His hand went down. He thought of that girl's delicate and lovely face as he continued the actions from the recent dream.

He desired her too much. She would appear even when he was dreaming.

The bed curtains were hanging low. The scene inside couldn't be seen. No one's voice could be heard. About the time it would take to steep a cup of tea, his hoarse voice called out in remembrance, "Ah Luo..."

## Chapter 60.2

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Early next morning, Zhao Jie woke up, washed his face, and rinsed his mouth. He was without any ailments as usual.

Soon after he had breakfast, as he had expected, he received Empress Chen's imperial decree that ordered him to enter the palace immediately.

He changed into a light green robe decorated with a bamboo pattern. Instead of riding a horse, he entered the palace in carriage that had a green canopy and arrived at Zhao Yang Hall's entrance. Before he even entered the hall, he could feel the deep gloomy atmosphere that was inside. He curved his lips and walked inside in a few steps. He saw Empress Chen sitting on a rosewood arhat couch. She was expressionlessly drinking tea.

Seeing that he had entered, Empress Chen put down the lid of her lotus flower pattern teacup. She looked at him without changing her expression, "You can sit down."

Zhao Jie removed his cloak and sat down across from her.

She had the palace servants bring out the items. The table was soon filled with silver longevity charms, silver waist accessories, happiness necklaces and other similar items... She deliberately asked Zhao Jie, "Last month, Duke Zhen's younger paternal cousin Duke Ding's had his first grandson. The child will be one month old in a few days. This empress was thinking about what to give the child as our first meeting gift. Help me select a gift. See which gift would be better."

The meaning in her words was obvious. Duke Ding's son was twenty-one years old this year and he already had a son. Zhao Jie was twenty-two years old and he didn't even have a wife. How could Empress Chen not feel anxious?

Zhao Jie smiled and bluntly said, "Imperial mother, just directly

say the words that you want to say.”

Empress Chen glared at him. She held her teacup as she went straight to the point, "I sent you two women last night. What were you unsatisfied with? Why did you have to drive them out of your residence?"

He just knew that it was because of this. He looked up at Empress Chen's questioning eyes, "Imperial mother didn't ask about my opinion before stuffing two women at me. In your heart, is your imperial son the type of person that's so hungry that he'll eat anything indiscriminately?"

Zhao Jie not only rejecting her accusation, but also counter attacked with his own accusation. Empress Chen was stifled. Her tone wasn't as unreasonable as before when she said, "When did I have such a thought? It was only that you don't have any woman at your side and I was worried, so I thought of this method."

Last night, the palace had been locked. Liu Jiang and Ye Mei stood outside the entire night with only thin clothing. When they entered the palace the next morning, they were so cold that their entire bodies were shivering. They were also scared that Empress Chen would punish them, so they didn't go back to their rooms. Early in the morning, they kowtowed and begged for mercy outside of Zhao Yang Hall. They cried until Empress Chen's heart softened. This was when Empress Chen decided to call Zhao Jie into the palace so she could carefully interrogate him.

What was he thinking? Did he actually have any interest towards women?

Seeing that he wasn't saying anything, Empress Chen was too impatient and couldn't resist adding, "You're not young anymore. If you don't marry soon, how much long are you planning on dragging this out? Dan Yang has waited five to six years for you. She's already waited until she's an old maid now. You're not anxious, but Duke Zhen and your maternal aunt are very anxious.



What exactly are you thinking? What are you unsatisfied about with Dan Yang?"

Zhao Jie calmly said, "I only have sibling affection for her. There isn't any romantic affection.

Empress Chen had never met such a stubborn person. So what if he only had sibling affection for her? After he married her, he could properly cultivate their relationship. Wouldn't there be romantic affection then?

She tried to persuade him, but these words had been so many times. Even if she wasn't tired of saying them, he was already tired of hearing them. Zhao Jie furrowed his eyebrows and changed the topic, "What has Liuli been doing lately? I haven't seen her in a while."

"She's in Chen Hua Hall. Lately, she seems much calmer and hasn't been fussing over leaving the palace," Empress Chen casually said. She still didn't forget the previous topic and continued, "The day after tomorrow is Duke Ding's grandson's one month old birthday. Deliver the present on behalf of imperial mother. When you meet Dan Yang, say a few more extra words with her. I heard that her mood hasn't been good recently."

Duke Ding was Duke Zhen's younger paternal cousin and their two families were close. Gao Dang Yang would definitely also attend.

Zhao Jie reflexively refused. He wasn't good at dealing with this type of occasion.

Empress Chen had already known his way of thinking, so she rushed to say, "If you don't go, you'll be forbidden from entering Zhao Yang Hall."

He laughed involuntarily and helplessly said, "Is imperial mother using that to threaten me?"

Empress Chen rather magnanimously admitted, "Yes."

He lowered his eyes and didn't say anything. He considered the silver longevity charms on the wooden table. His thumb slowly stroked the wood grain. After a moment, he nodded and said, "Okay, I'll go."

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Duke Ying's residence had also received Duke Ding's invitation.

Duke Ying had a good relationship with Duke Ding. Their relationship was honest and generous. When they were younger, they mutually helped each other and were close friends. Now that Duke Ding had his first grandson, Duke Ying would definitely go the celebration. In addition to Duke Ying (Wei Zhang Chun), the members of first, second, fourth and fifth branch were also going. Only third branch's Liu-shi was deferring the invitation with the excuse that she wasn't feeling well.

Everyone knew that Liu-shi's parents' home had declined and wasn't able to make ends meet. The majority of her remaining dowry had been sent back to subsidize her parent's home. Now, she couldn't even bring out a decent gift for a one-month-old baby's birthday, so naturally she wouldn't be willing to go out and disgrace herself.

On the day after tomorrow, early morning, Wei Kun properly arranged everything and brought his son and two daughters to Duke Ding's residence.

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At the same time, at Prince Ru Yang's residence, as Prince Ru Yang and Elder Princess Gao Yang Zhang were preparing to leave to go to Duke Ding's residence, they heard from a servant that their son had returned. Li Song had been fooling around outside during the previous two days without coming home at night. Prince Ru Yang had ordered people to look for him twice, but Li Song had been completely drunk and driven the people away.

Prince Ru Yang had been extremely angry and threatened that he would ignore him in the future. They were surprised that Li Song had returned on his own today.

Elder Princess Gao Yang was worried about her son and had Li Xiang go over to his room to look, "Xiang-er, see how your older brother is doing. If he's sober, have him come with us."

Li Xiang adjusted her eight-treasure jade necklace, stood up, and said, "Okay."

Li Xiang left the receiving room and walked towards the back of the residence. She passed a long path on her way to Li Song's courtyard. She stood outside his door and called out, "Older brother." But, she didn't hear any response. She could only push the door open and enter his inner room. A pungent smell of alcohol assaulted her nose. She took out a thick silk handkerchief to cover her nose and mouth and called out in a low, muffled voice, "Older brother, are you here?"

There was movement behind the bed's curtains. She stepped forward to open the curtain. As expected, there was a person lying there. It had only been a short period of two days, but Li Song seemed to have become thinner and there was beard stubble growing on his chin. He seemed like a completely different person than his previous charming and handsome self. Li Xiang was extremely surprised. She hurriedly shook him awake, "Older brother, what happened to you? Wake up. Father and mother want you to come with us to Duke Ding's residence. Don't keep sleeping."

Li Song frowned and finally slowly opened his eyes. His eyes were dark and muddled. There was a moment of confusion, but soon his eyes turned and landed on Li Xiang's anxious little face. He hoarsely said, "Li Xiang?"

Li Xiang nodded, "It's me. Older brother, why are you like this?"

He only felt his head aching. He had drunk too much during the

past two days to the point that he wasn't clear-headed. He held his head as he slowly sat up. His eyebrows were pinched as he said, "I was in a bad mood, so I drunk some wine." He thought of her anxious appearance and asked, "What happened?"

Li Xiang could only repeat the words she had just said, "It's Duke Ding's grandson's one-month-old birthday today. Father and mother had been invited to his birthday. Since you're back, come with us?"

He fell back down on the bed and declined, "Go without me. I'm going to sleep here for a bit."

He had come home around 3-5am today. He hadn't slept for a long time before she woke him up. At the moment, his head ached and he wasn't in the mood to go outside.

But, Li Xiang's following words jolted him awake, "How can you still sleep? I heard that Duke Ying's family is also going. Wei Chang Hong had previously been injured at the hunting range. If you don't go, wouldn't that make us look guilty?" She tugged at him and said, "Older brother, get up."

He opened his eyes. His body had become as stiff as a corpse's.

# Chapter 61.1

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About an hour later, Li Song finished washing his face, rinsing his mouth, and changing into a clean sky blue robe embroidered with golden thread. His appearance was impressive when he left his room.

He arrived at the receiving room and saluted Prince Ru Yang and Elder Princess Gao Yang, then he said, "Father, mother, let's leave."

Prince Ru Yang (Li Zhi Liang) severely harrumphed. It was clear that he was displeased with Li Song's behavior during the past two days, "You can still remember to come home? I was going to treat it as if you had already died somewhere outside!"

Li Song straightened up from saluting and his handsome eyebrows went up. He looked incredibly rebellious as if he was the devil's incarnate. "If I had really died, would father be happy?"

Li Zhi Liang furrowed his eyebrows, "You..."

Seeing that her husband and son were going to start arguing again, Elder Princess Gao Yang (Zhao Xuan) discontentedly glared at Li Zhi Liang. She disliked that he couldn't calmly speak and would frequently yell and shout instead. "Our son is well. Why are you saying such unlucky words? Why can't you calmly and even-temperedly speak?" Then, she immediately turned around to look at Li Song and her tone changed to loving and pampering, "Everything is fine now that you returned. In the future, don't stay out all night for so long. Mother will worry."

Li Song slightly nodded. He would occasionally listen to Elder Princess Gao Yang's words. He wasn't beyond redemption.

Seeing her family gathered together, Zhao Xuan smiled and said, "Okay, let's go. After such a long delay, I'm worried that we're already late."

Soon, Zhao Xuan left the hall with Li Xiang supporting her and Li

Zhi Liang closely following them.

Li Song quietly walked behind them and slowly put away the expression on his face.

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At Duke Ding's residence.

Fourth madam Qin-shi had also brought along Wei Chang Mi to Duke Ding's grandson's one-month-old birthday. This was Wei Chang Mi's first time participating in this type of occasion and he had excitedly cheered with his hands and feet on the way here in the carriage. When they arrived at Duke Ding's residence, he obediently quieted down and stayed in Qin-shi's arms. His eyes turned and the high spirits he was showing just a moment ago completely disappeared.

Qin-shi scratched his nose and laughed at him, "Didn't you just say that you want to meet younger brother? Why aren't you saying anything now?"

Wei Chang Mi wrapped his arms around Qin-shi's neck. His small tender white face curled into a ball, "Mother, there's so many people. I'm scared."

These words were true. Many people were visiting Duke Ding's residence today. The women had entered the residence through the side door. The front courtyard was full of people and there was continuous laughter that traveled to rear courtyard without stopping.

Duke Ding and Duke Ying had similar levels of famous reputations and splendid prestige in the imperial court. In addition, Duke Ding was an amiable person unlike Duke Ying who was very stubborn, so he had many friends. Today was his grandson's one-month-old birthday. One after another, people hurried here to help him celebrate.

Qin-shi laughed and said, "Why are you scared? Mother is here.

Older sister Ah Luo is also here. No one will bully you."

At the mention of older sister Ah Luo, Wei Chang Mi's eyes brightened. He looked left and right, but he didn't see her. His mouth shriveled and he said, "Older sister Ah Luo isn't here."

Qin-shi also looked for her and discovered that Wei Luo really wasn't here. Until she asked Wei Zheng, she didn't know that Marquis Ping Yuan's carriage had been behind them and Wei Luo had gone to the back to look for Liang Yu Rong to talk with. Qin-shi shook her head helplessly, "That girl."

Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong were walking behind the crowd. They didn't have any urgent secret news to tell each other. They were just casually sharing what they had recently seen and heard.

Liang Yu Rong pulled Ah Luo closer by the wrist and whispered into her ear, "Guess who I just saw?"

Ah Luo slowed her steps, tilted her head, and thought, "Li Xiang?"

Liang Yu Rong immediately showed an incredulous expression. She widened her eyes as if she were asking, "How did you know?"

Ah Luo curved her lips, gently laughed, and objected to her surprise, "Other than her, is there anyone else that you would especially mention to me?"

This was quite true. Liang Yu Rong didn't continue to be surprised. Shoulder to shoulder, they walked on the cobblestone path. Fortunately, the front courtyard was noisy, so the people in front of them didn't hear their words. Liang Yu Rong knew that Wei Chang Hong had been injured by Li Song and didn't have any good feelings towards those siblings.

She was a straightforward person that was very candid about who she liked and disliked. Thus, at the present moment, she shared the same hatred as Wei Luo for those two enemies.

By the time they walked to the rear courtyard's reception

pavilion, there were already many women sitting inside. At the center, Duke Ding's wife was sitting at an Eight Immortal beech table. She was receiving the guests with her daughter-in-law Sun-shi. Sun-shi was holding her son Gao Zhan. He was wrapped with floral brocade swaddling clothes. The little fellow was still very small. His face was white and his eyes were big, but he looked femininely beautiful. His personality was shy. He wouldn't let outsiders hold him and would only lie down in his mother's arms. If anyone else touched him, he would cry.

Wei Chang Mi was the youngest person in his family. He hadn't met a person younger than him before, so he was very curious about Gao Zhan. He left Qin-shi's arms and walked to Sun-shi. He picked up a chestnut and osmanthus pastry from the Eight Immortal table and asked Sun-shi, "Why does he keep crying? Is he hungry? Does he eat this?"

Sun-shi smiled and shook her head.

Wei Chang Mi placed down the chestnut and osmanthus pastry and picked up a pea pastry, "What about this?"

Sun-shi still shook her head. She laughed and said, "He can't eat that either."

Like this, Wei Chang Mi went through all of the pastries on the Eight Immortal table. But Gao Zhan couldn't eat any of it. He pouted, "Why doesn't he eat anything? Then, what does he eat? No wonder he's crying from hunger."

After these words were said, one after another, everyone in the reception pavilion started laughing. A few madams held their handkerchiefs to dab at their eyes. They laughed so hard that they cried. They thought Wei Chang Mi's actions were extremely cute.

Wei Chang Mi didn't know why everyone was laughing, but he knew that they were laughing at him. Standing in front of Sun-shi, he finally felt a bit embarrassed. He turned around, ran over to Qin-shi's side, did his best to hide himself, and only showed a pair



of dark eyes.

Qin-shi also laughed. She rubbed his head and said, "Silly child, younger brother doesn't eat the same things as you. He won't starve."

He seemed to understand, but also not understand and said, "Oh." He tilted his head and asked, "Then what does younger brother eat?"

Coincidentally, Gao Zhan's nurse was going to feed him milk at this time. Qin-shi let him go over there to look. Shortly after, Wei Chang Mi ran out with his small face taut. With a blushing face, he said, "So, younger brother doesn't need to eat. He only needs to suck to be full."

Qin-shi laughed involuntarily. She knew that he didn't understand and didn't continue explaining.

Fortunately, he didn't continue asking. After he saw Wei Luo, he focused on bothering her.

## Chapter 61.2

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The reception pavilion was packed with people. Duke Ding's wife had her younger daughter, Gao Yi Yu, lead the women to the back courtyard's octagonal pavilion to sit. Gao Yi Yu was eighteen years old this year and had married at the beginning of the year. Today, she had returned to her parent's home to see her small nephew. Before she was married, she was very close with Gao Dan Yang. At the moment, the two of them were walking in the front and leading the women to the octagonal pavilion.

Wei Chang Mi wouldn't be obedient. He insisted on following along. Qin-shi didn't have any ideas and could only inconvenience Wei Luo with watching over him.

The group of people arrived at the pavilion. There were stone benches and stools and also benches next to the fencing in the pavilion. Gao Yi Yu warmly found a place for each of the women. Wei Luo had a little tagalong, so it was inconvenient no matter where she went. So, she could only have Jin Lu and Bai Lan watched over him.

"Younger sister Ah Luo, come here to sit." Gao Dan Yang called out to her in a smile.

Wei Luo looked around. There wasn't seating elsewhere, so she pulled Liang Yu Rong with her to sit at the stone table. She sweetly laughed, "Then I'll have to bother older sister Gao."

Gao Dan Yang was very attentive towards her. Someone that didn't know would think their relationship was very good. In reality, they had only privately met and talked one time. Gao Dan Yang's good feelings towards her were an unfathomable mystery. Because it was mystery, Wei Luo was extra careful when talking with her.

Gao Dan Yang ordered the servant girls to serve tea and introduced Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong to Gao Yi Yu, "This is Duke

Ying's fourth miss, Wei Luo. This is Marquis Ping Yuan's eldest miss, Liang Yu Rong."

Gao Yi Yu smiled and nodded. It could be counted as a greeting.

Gao Dan Yang placed a white glazed tea cup with a plum blossom design in front of Wei Luo and with an unhurried tone, she said, "The last time we met at Jin He Villa, I happily talked with younger sister Ah Luo as if I was meeting an old friend. Unfortunately, there wasn't enough time and we couldn't talk to our heart's content. Since we're both here at Duke Ding's residence today, we must have a good long chat."

Wei Luo thanked her, accepted the teacup, and politely said, "Older sister Gao is right. I haven't met a kindred spirit like older sister in a long time."

The two people chatted back and forth with exceptionally sincere expressions.

Liang Yu Rong wasn't suitable for this type of situation. She silent sipped her tea. Since she couldn't help Wei Luo, she wouldn't impede her either.

Several words were said and Wei Luo dealt with them perfectly. Her words weren't overly fond, but her words didn't give off a cold feeling either. Her every word and movement was above reproach. Gao Dan Yang's expression didn't change. She continued smiling and suddenly asked, "Does younger sister Ah Luo like to listen to musicals?"

Wei Luo drank a mouthful of tea and leisurely said, "I listen to musicals occasionally. My favorite musical is Rong Chun's Phoenix Also Nests."

Gao Dan Yang said, "Oh. What a coincidence, I also like to listen to that musical. When I went to Rong Chun to listen to a musical last time, as I was leaving, I think I saw younger sister Ah Luo. I was about to call out to you, but unfortunately, you disappeared in

a blink of an eye."

Wei Luo blinked and casually asked, "Does older sister Gao remember the date?"

"It was probably around three days before the hunting competition." She pondered and acted as if she had just realized something, "At that time, older cousin Jing and Liuli were also in the street. I heard from older cousin Jing that younger sister Ah Luo had went there with them."

Wei Luo made a sound of agreement and didn't express an opinion.

Gao Dan Yang covered her smiling lips and said, "No wonder. I always had the impression that older cousin Jing didn't like to listen to musicals. To see him at a place for musicals, it was outside of my expectations."

On the side, Gao Yi Yu was currently drinking tea. Hearing these words, she showed a surprise expression, "You said that you saw older cousin Prince Jing going to listen to a musical."

"Yes." Gao Dan Yang also found it hard to believe. She turned her head and said to Gao Yi Yu, "Do you remember that I had invited older cousin Jing to go outside to listen to a play on my fifteenth birthday? No matter what I said, he wouldn't agree. In the end, I was angry and threatened to never talk to him again. Later, I didn't forgive him until he gave me a pair of jasper bracelets as an apology."

As she said this, she raised her embroidered moon white sleeve to show that pair of translucent jasper bracelets. "It's this pair. I've always been wearing them since then. Look, aren't they beautiful?"

Gao Yi Yu made fun of her, "You've already had me look at them so many times. How could they not be beautiful?"

Gao Dan Yang pursed her lips, smiled, and lowered her eyes. She

behaved rather like a charming and pampered young girl.

In reality, these bracelets weren't from Zhao Jie. That year, after she had tearfully complained to Empress Chen, Empress Chen had used Zhao Jie's name to give these bracelets to her. Perhaps, Zhao Jie didn't even know about the existence of these bracelets. Or, perhaps he knew but didn't care. But, she highly regarded them and had been wearing them for the past several years. She couldn't bear to take them off.

Wei Luo held her cheeks and looked at those bracelets. They weren't especially special and didn't even look as good as the turquoise squirrel waist accessory she was wearing.

A moment later, the servant girls served several types of fruits and pastries for the women to sample.

Gao Dan Yang looked up, suddenly stood up, and looked across the octagonal pavilion.

Wei Luo wasn't sure about her actions, so she followed her line of sight and only saw two people passing through the lakeside. One person wasn't familiar. The other person was wearing an embroidered sky blue robe. It was Zhao Jie.

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Zhao Jie and Duke Ding's heir, Gao He were walking on the path to the front courtyard. In private, the two of them were friendly with each other and their discussion was harmonious.

As they were walking, they suddenly heard a voice from behind, "Older cousin Jing!"

Zhao Jie subconsciously furrowed his eyebrows. He originally hadn't want to linger here, but Gao He stopped and said, "Young cousin, Dan Yang is coming."

Holding up her skirt, Gao Dan Yang arrived at their side. Because she had hurriedly walked here, her face was slightly pink. After she had stabilized herself, she smiled and asked, "Why did you two

come here? Did something happen in the front courtyard?"

Gao He took out a handkerchief, handed it over to her, shook his head, and said, "Look at you. You shouldn't be so anxious and impatient at your age." Then he answered, "A servant spilled wine on His Highness, Prince Jing's clothes, so I brought him to the rear courtyard to change into clean clothes. We were just about to return to the receiving room."

Gao Dan Yang's face showed that she realized something. Shortly after, she smiled and said, "Did older cousin give you this clothing? The sleeves are too short."

Gao He looked embarrassed. This was indeed his clothing. His stature wasn't short. He was the tallest person in their family. Unexpectedly, when Zhao Jie wore his clothes, it was a bit too short. When this set of clothing was newly made this year, the size was slightly too big and he hadn't worn it before, so he took this out to give to Zhao Jie to change into. It was fine in the other places, only the sleeves were a bit too short and revealed Zhao Jie's wrist. It wasn't too conspicuous. As long as people weren't meticulously looking, they wouldn't find it strange.

Gao Dan Yang looked at him and suddenly found something wrong. She pointed at his wrist and asked, "Older brother Jing, why do you have a bite mark here? I haven't seen it before. Who bit you..." As she said this, she prepared to take a closer look.

Zhao Jie expressionlessly took his hand away from her view and coldly said, "It's nothing. It was from a long time ago." Then, he turned to look in the direction of the octagonal pavilion. There were many girls in the prime of their youth wearing a wide variety of colorful clothing there. From far away, they looked like brightly colored decorations.

In a single glance, he saw Wei Luo sitting on a stone seat. Her back was facing him. Her petite body was wearing a cherry blossom colored robe embroidered with flowers and birds. Her

exquisite and slender body attracted the most attention.

Her servant girl was whispering something into her ear. He didn't what she said, but Wei Luo suddenly stood up, left the pavilion, and walked in the direction of the bamboo forest.

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Bai Lan had been looking after Wei Chang Mi. In only a short period of time, they had both disappeared!

This wasn't their home. They were at Duke Ding's residence. If something happened, it would be troublesome. Hearing from Jin Lu that the two of them had went to the bamboo forest, she thought that they had gotten lost, so she had Jin Lu go to the reception pavilion to inform Qin-shi, and went to the bamboo forest to look for them herself.

The bamboo forest wasn't large, but the inside felt deep. The emerald green bamboo leaves were dense and blocked the sunlight from above. It wasn't easy to search for people inside here. Wei Luo pushed away the bamboo leaves in front of her face and continued walking deeper into the bamboo forest. As she walked, she called out, "Wei Chang Mi, Bai Lan, where are you?"

The bamboo forest was silent. There was only the sound of the bamboo leaves being blown by the wind. As she walked deeper into the bamboo forest, she didn't hear any response and frowned. She thought that those two people were probably not here and lifted her skirt to go back. However, just as she turned around, a person suddenly appeared and blocked her way!

Surprised, she subconsciously retreated until her back was against a bamboo. At first sight, she saw the other person's familiar face and her eyes lowered, "Li Song?"

Li Song turned a blind eye towards her loathing. He raised his eyebrow and walked to her front in a few steps, "It's me."

Wei Luo looked up and said with a cold voice, "Why are you here?"

Are you behind Wei Chang Mi and Bai Lan's disappearance?"

He seemed as if he didn't hear her question. He stepped closer to her. If he lowered his head, it would be right in front of her forehead. Eye to eye, he said, "Wei Luo, why aren't you asking me if my injury has healed?"

This position was too intimate. Wei Luo stretched out her hand to push him away. However, he held her shoulder in place and wouldn't let her move. There was naturally a large contrast between a man's and a woman's strength. In addition, he had been practicing martial arts since he was a child. Wei Luo naturally wasn't his match when it came to strength. Her heart was jittery, but her lips showed a smile, "Why would I ask you this? Could it be that you don't know that I'm longing for you to die sooner?"

Li Song gaze fixated on her as if he wanted to see beyond her façade and understand her thoroughly.

But it was useless. No matter how he looked, when she looked at him, her gaze was still full of hatred and loathing.

The pit of his stomach felt as if had been blocked by something. It had felt stuffy and uncomfortable. He had thought a lot during the past two days. Why did he keep thinking about her? It couldn't be because she never showed a pleasant face in front of him? It couldn't be because every time he bullied her, she would viciously bully him back? Or, was it because when she smiled, it looked better than everyone else? He couldn't figure it out.

He stared at her, then he conceitedly smiled, "Didn't you ask me if I liked you? If I died, there wouldn't be anyone who liked you."

Wei Luo hadn't expected that he would actually admit it. She was stunned at first, but soon her lips curved. She wanted to laugh at him.

But, in the next moment, she couldn't laugh.

He held her shoulder, leaned over, and bit her lip without



hesitation.

## Chapter 62.1

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His lips didn't kiss hers.

Wei Luo opened her eyes wider in surprise. If he had dared to kiss her, she would have bitten off his tongue. Unfortunately, before she could do this action, she was torn away from Li Song's hold by a stronger force. When she opened her eyes, there was a sky blue robe in front of her. She couldn't see that person's face and could only feel that person's arm tightly holding her with oppressive anger.

Zhao Jie had appeared without warning. One hand was around Wei Luo. The other hand was choking Li Song until his blue veins appeared. A layer of haze enveloped Zhao Jie's face. Word by word, he asked, "Li Song, do you want to die?"

Just now, he had seen Wei Luo suddenly leave from the lakeside and walk towards the bamboo forest by herself. He felt a bit worried. This bamboo forest was vast with a complicated composition. He was worried that she would get lost in the bamboo forest, so he asked Gao Dang Yang and Gao He to entered the bamboo forest from the other side. He hadn't expected that he would see this scene. Another man was closely holding his girl and was even lowering his head to kiss her. He had desired her lips for so long, but restrained himself from touching it even once. Was Li Song tired of living?

The more that Zhao Jie thought about this, the angrier he became. His slender fingers tightened and almost disconnected Li Song's bones.

He should have guessed this earlier. Li Song had a hidden ulterior motive towards Wei Luo. They had started their feud as children and their interactions with each other were different than other people's. It was too easy for deep affection to spawn from this type of situation. If Li Song even realized this slightly, he would start

becoming interested in Wei Luo. So, he didn't want Wei Luo to pay too much attention to Li Song. If she did, then after a while, it would be easy for this attention to give rise to another type of feeling.

He definitely didn't want to see that day.

He had lifted Li Song up into midair. Li Song's face was pallid, but he smiled challengingly and disapprovingly, "Prince Jing... do you also want?"

Zhao Jie paused and his gaze became colder.

They were both aware in their hearts that Li Song's words weren't in response to his earlier question. Instead, Li Song was asking him, "Do you also want to kiss her?"

Li Song knew his thoughts. When he thought about it, this was normal. When you adore a woman, you would pay close attention to her every word and action, including the men that revolved around her. His treatment of Wei Luo was too special. It was too easy for other people to find out as long as they paid extra attention.

Zhao Jie loosened his hold on him and heavily flung him to the ground. He held Wei Luo's hand and started walking out of the bamboo forest. As he walked, he ordered, "Zhu Geng, cripple his hands for this prince."

Zhu Geng had been hidden in the surroundings this entire time. Hearing Zhao Jie's order, his figure appeared out of thin air in a flash, stood in front of Li Song, nodded and said, "Yes, prince."

Although Li Song had martial art skills, Zhu Geng was a person who depended his livelihood on his martial art skills. There was still a difference in their skill levels. Zhu Geng threw a punch at him to declare his intention to fight. At first, Li Song was able to meet Zhu Geng's attacks, but gradually the fight became more difficult and his movements became messy until he didn't have the

leeway to hit back. After another ten moves, he saw that Wei Luo and Zhao Jie's backs were going farther and farther away. During this moment of distraction, Zhu Geng kicked him a far distance and he heavily hit a bamboo plant!

The bamboo leaves rustled. The bamboo plant was cut off in the middle and fell backwards with a loud crash. Li Song held his chest and heavily coughed. The injury there had just healed. Now that Zhu Geng kicked the injured spot, it was piercingly painful.

He turned his head and spit out a mouthful of blood. Before he was able to feel more at ease, Zhu Geng captured his left hand. In the next moment, a sharp pain came from his wrist. The sound of the bamboo leaves whirling and the water gurgling concealed the sound of his bones breaking. Cold sweat broke out on his forehead. With great difficulty, he resisted calling out. His eyes closed and he fell down backwards!

Outside of the bamboo forest, there was a moon gate. After they passed through the moon gate, there was an area that didn't attract many people's attention. One side was a pale wall. The other side was the bamboo forest. If it wasn't because he sometimes deliberately came here, no one usually passed by here.

On the way here, Zhao Jie tightly held Wei Luo's wrist without speaking.

Wei Luo had followed behind him. She had struggled several times on the way here, but he had held her wrist tighter. His strength was great and he had hurt her wrist. She had raised her voice and called out, "Big brother!" But, he wouldn't listen to her words and his face was very ugly. She blew out her cheeks and didn't continue speaking. She could only be patient.

He had probably come to Duke Ding's residence several times. Otherwise, he wouldn't be so familiar with this place. Wei Luo wasn't sure about his intentions in bringing her here.

Zhao Jie let go of her wrist, placed both of his hands on the wall

behind her, and corralled her into a corner. He lowered his head, stared at her lips, and hoarsely asked, "Did he kiss you?"

There didn't seem to be a reason for him to ask this question, only his heart knew how much he care about this. He had painstakingly taken care of this girl, had held her in the palm of his hand, and had treated her as treasure for several years. She had grown up to be as tender and lovely as a flower. He couldn't even bear to touch her and that Li Song had dared to try to kiss her. Right now, he felt that even if he hacked Li Song into mincemeat, it wouldn't be enough to quell the anger in his heart.

Wei Luo blinked. She didn't understand his question, so she asked, "Didn't big brother see? Why are you still asking me?"

He had seen, but he was worried that he hadn't seen everything. After all, he had arrived late and wasn't clear about what had happened before he came. What if Li Song had already kissed her? As soon as he thought of this possibility, it was hard to endure. He looked at Wei Luo's cherry lips, leaned over, and couldn't help stretching out his thumb to wipe at her petal-like lips. Soon after, his eyes darkened and his thumb went left and right. He wanted to erase any traces of Li Song.

Wei Luo made a quiet noise from his rubbing. She turned her head away because of the discomfort, "What's big brother doing?"

## Chapter 62.2

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He didn't reply and expressionlessly took out his silk handkerchief. He repeatedly wiped her lips. He wouldn't allow there to be traces of another person on her.

The silk handkerchief hadn't been moistened and hurt her lips as he wiped. Wei Luo tried to tilt her head to avoid, but he held her chin and wouldn't let her move.

He hoarsely coaxed her, "Ah Luo, be good. Don't move."

But, what exactly did he want to do? Whether or not Li Song kissed her, why did he care so much?

After a while, he finally stopped his hand. Seeing her pink lips swollen from his rubbing, the anger in his heart finally ceased.

His face gradually relaxed. Seeing the girl's red eyes and unhappy expression, his heart couldn't help softening and he coaxingly persuaded, "Why are you crying?"

Wei Luo flattened her lips and complained, "Hurts." Soon after, she pointed at her wrist and then at her mouth, "This hurts. This also hurts."

He faintly curved his lips. He felt increasingly fond of her cute and spoiled appearance. He held her wrist and said, "Let this prince look..."

As expected, there was a circle of bruises on her delicate wrist. It was recently only a bit red, but it was still increasing in vividness. It was probably because he had been too angry just a moment ago. He had forgotten to control his strength and had actually hurt her. The sharp contrast between the circle of bruises and her skin was a ghastly sight. Her skin was too tender. The slightest touch would redden her skin. He couldn't help feeling a bit depressed by this. She was so frail. In the future, after she married him, how could he love her dearly without apprehensions? He had waited for so long.

He had preserved over twenty years of energy for her. He couldn't guarantee that he would be able to control himself and not hurt her when the time came.

Zhao Jie softly rubbed those bruises, "Does this hurt?"

Wei Luo pursed her lips and answered his question with another question in an annoyed tone, "What does big brother think?"

As soon as he touched her, she subconsciously shrunk away from him. Her long eyelashes fluttered. She suddenly thought of something, looked up, and asked with misgivings, "Why did big brother appear there?"

He paused and without changing his expression, he said, "I passed by the octagonal pavilion and saw that you were walking to the bamboo forest. That bamboo forest's paths are complicated and messy, so I was worried that you would get lost."

Reluctantly, she could accept this excuse. Wei Low slowly said, "Oh." She didn't continue her questioning.

They shouldn't keep standing here. If someone passed by here and saw them, it would be hard to explain.

Zhao Jie felt bad about her wrist and hovered his hand around it. There was already a large bruise forming in that area. If he didn't take care of the bruise quickly, it might turn purple tomorrow. He led her out of this area and called out to a passing servant to bring medicine. He easily and familiarly walked towards a room and took her inside. After waiting for the servant to bring the medicine, he first warmed up the medicine in his hands, then he carefully applied the medicine onto her wrist.

Zhao Jie would occasionally come to Duke Ding's residence and could be considered familiar with its layout. This room hadn't been used by anyone in recent years, but it was still regularly cleaned. The table and chairs were free of dust and the windows on the inside were also clean. It would be fine to stay here for a while.

After he applied the medicine, Zhao Jie stood up, washed his hand, and pretended to inadvertently mention, "Ah Luo, when I passed by the pavilion, why did you ignore this prince?"

Wei Luo's wrist smelled of medicine. She lifted her wrist to her nose to smell and said without thinking, "Older sister Gao went to look for you."

He paused, looked at her, and asked, "What does Gao Dan Yang looking for me have to do with you?"

She tilted her head, "Everyone says that you and older sister Gao are a couple." As she said this, her eyes turned and she seemingly casually said, "You also gave her a pair of jasper bracelets. Older sister Gao showed me them. They look pretty."

Zhao Jie furrowed his eyebrows and stopped drying his hand, "What bracelets?" He didn't have the slightest impression of them.

Wei Luo repeated the words that Gao Dan Yang had told her about the bracelets, including the part about listening to musicals. After finishing, she supported her cheeks in her hands and asked, "Big brother, do you have a lot of precious stones in your residence? If you have too many, could you give me some?"

The implication was that he used the same method in coaxing all girls into a happier mood. He didn't use the slightest new idea. He gave Gao Dan Yang a pair of jasper bracelets and he gave her a turquoise squirrel waist accessory. Although the items were different, the essence was the same.

Zhao Jie didn't remember this past event until she mentioned this, but he had never given Gao Dan Yang bracelets. He didn't even have to think to know that this was the masterpiece of Empress Chen. His face didn't show his unease. Why did Gao Dan Yang tell Wei Luo this? Did she mention this topic without thinking or was she deliberately warning her?

His heart was displeased, but he didn't show any of this to Wei



Luo. After he carefully thought about it and followed the clue, the edges of his lips were overflowing in their curvature. Did she say these words because she cared about him? She didn't want him to give things to Gao Dang Yang?

Be that as it may, what had to be explained should still be explained, so that she wouldn't misunderstand. He held back his laughter and said, "I haven't given her anything. I didn't give her those bracelets. Ah Luo, this prince has only given you gifts."

Wei Luo looked at him. Her eyes cleared. A wave of light flashed through her eyes.

She pursed her pink lips and thought of the words that Zhao Liuli had mentioned that day. Zhao Liuli had listed Yang Zhen's good treatment of her one by one. After she finished listening and seriously thought about it. Hadn't Zhao Jie done the same things for her that Yang Zhen did for Zhao Liuli? He never had a pleasant face for other people, but he had endless patience for her.

Would he always treat her well? Would he always only treat her well?

She reached out her hand to grab his sleeve. She looked at him with limpid eyes like a deer's and opened her mouth to say, "Big brother, you..."

Zhao Jie turned back to look at her and waited for her to speak.

She stated, "In the future, you can't give anyone else gifts or treat anyone else nicely. You're only allowed to be good to me."

There was a ripple in Zhao Jie's dark eyes. He looked at her and slowly asked, "Why?"

Wei Luo hadn't thought about why. After he asked why, she felt somewhat at a loss

Just as she was about to open her mouth, there was a soft and timid knock on the door.

They both look towards the door and only saw Jin Lu awkwardly standing there. She looked rather cautious as she said, "Miss, Your Highness Prince Jing... seventh young master has been found. Bai Lan took him to the lotus pond behind the bamboo forest. They met Prince Ru Yang's daughter..."

## Chapter 63.1

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At first, Wei Chang Mi followed Wei Luo to the rear courtyard's octagonal pavilion. Later, he saw that Wei Luo was speaking to other people and ignoring him. Bored by himself, he ran away from the area.

Originally, he was only playing at the edge of the bamboo forest and Bai Lan was following a few steps behind him. However, he unknowingly walked farther and farther away from the octagonal pavilion and towards the lotus pond behind the bamboo forest. It wasn't the time to see the lotus flowers in the pond yet. There were only fishes swimming underneath the water. Wei Chang Mi stood at the side of the pond to look. He was so focused that he didn't notice someone else passing by the pond.

Li Xiang had just come here from the front courtyard. She had gone there to look for her older brother Li Song. She had looked everywhere once, but didn't find him. She didn't know where he went and could only give up and return to the rear courtyard by herself.

As she passed by the lotus pond, she saw a beautiful five or six year old child. She didn't know what he was jabbering to the pond. He seemed a bit familiar to her. She had seen him recently in the reception pavilion and knew that he was Wei Luo's younger brother. She couldn't resist frowning in disgust and loathing. She didn't have the slightest positive feeling towards any member of House Wei.

Just as she desired to walk past him, Li Xiang's thoughts changed and she suddenly stopped. She turned around and looked at Wei Chang Mi again. Seeing that the child was focused on watching the fishes and wasn't paying attention to her, she called out, "Wei Chang Mi?"

Wei Chang Mi looked in the direction of the sound. He didn't

recognize her. He blinked his bright, dark eyes and curiously asked, "Older sister, do you know me?"

Li Xiang walked back to his side. She smiled and meaningfully said, "I've heard of you."

His only reaction was thoughtfully saying, "Oh." Then, he crouched down, gathered the purslane grass on the ground, and sprinkled it on the water to feed the fish. One after another, the fish swam over and boldly ate the grass that he had sprinkled. The splashes of the water from the swimming fish sprayed onto his face. He didn't care and only wiped his face with his sleeve. He continued immersing himself in pulling the grass to feed the fish.

Li Xiang wasn't able to get another response from him. Seeing that he wasn't interested in her, she couldn't resist asking him another question. This was a question that would attract his attention. "Why are you here by yourself? Where's your older sister?"

The tips of his shoes had been splashed wet by the fishes. He was wiping them with his little hands. He looked up and politely replied, "Ah Luo is over there talking. I'm here playing by myself and not bothering her." As he said this, he stretched his hand to point towards the octagonal pavilion.

Li Xiang raised her eyebrows. Soon after, she asked in astonishment, "I didn't mean your older sister Wei Luo. I meant Wei Zheng. Where's your older sister Wei Zheng?"

At the mention of Wei Zheng, Wei Chang Mi's young and tender face wrinkled. He pouted and said, "I don't like her... I don't play with her."

Wei Zheng's face turned ugly and fierce as soon as she saw him. She wished that she could stare a hole into his body. Although he was young, he could differentiate between who liked him and who disliked him. Wei Zheng was full of malice towards him. He was scared of her and would subconsciously avoid her. Although Wei

Luo always said he was annoying, her annoyance towards him wasn't the same as Wei Zheng's.

Every time she went outside, she would bring back small pastries and snacks for him. Although she said it was for Qin-shi, the majority of the pastries all went into his stomach. He knew that Wei Luo didn't truly dislike him. Wei Luo was the only older sister that he liked.

Hearing these words, Li Xiang was stunned for a moment. Then she used her silk handkerchief to hide her laughter. Her laughter sounded crisp with a bit of ridicule. Not only did her laughter sound unpleasant, it was also a bit harsh and ear piercing.

Wei Chang Mi wrinkled his white bun face. He clutched his ear and asked, "Older sister, why are you laughing?"

After a while, Li Xiang finally laughed enough. She put down her handkerchief and said, "I'm laughing at you."

He looked confused, "Laughing at me?"

"Right, I'm laughing at you." Li Xiang curved up her lips and looked at him up and down again as if she was looking at novel goods. Wei Chang Mi didn't like the way that she was looking at him. It made his entire body feel uncomfortable. She finally saw enough and slowly said, "I'm laughing at you for your ignorance and pitifulness. You don't even know that you've been lied to. What did Wei Luo tell you? Did she tell you that you're Qin-shi's son? Did she use sweet words to deceive you? Let me tell you the truth. You're not Qin-shi's son. Your mother is fifth madam. Wei Zheng is your actual older sister!"

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It wasn't a secret that Qin-shi was fostering fifth branch's son. Any family that had relatively close dealings with Duke Ying's family knew this. After all, at the time, Qin-shi didn't have any signs of pregnancy. It would have been difficult to explain to

outsiders how this new son appeared out of thin air, so only the truth could be told. Although they didn't say to outsiders that Du-shi had done something wrong that year, discerning people knew that if she hadn't committed a serious crime, why would someone else raise her son?

This was obvious in everyone's mind, but no one mentioned it.

Although Li Xiang didn't know the entire story, she could guess most of the untold parts from the gossip that she had heard. She had deliberately said these words to Wei Chang Mi to try to drive a wedge between his relationship with Wei Luo.

Back at the reception pavilion, he had been so close with Wei Luo. When he had sweetly called out "Older sister Ah Luo", Wei Zheng's face had been very ugly. If he knew that Wei Zheng was his actual older sister and that House Wei had locked up his mother, what would his reaction be?

Who would have thought that Wei Chang Mi wouldn't have any reaction after hearing this? He calmly looked at her and said, "Oh, I already knew this."

Li Xiang's smiling expression froze. She looked at him incredulously, "You already knew?"

He nodded. He didn't want to continue talking about this topic and went back to crouching down at the lotus pond and feeding the fishes, "But mother has said, older sister Ah Luo is also my older sister..."

## Chapter 63.2

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He had always known that he had two mothers. One mother lived in fourth branch's Plum Courtyard. The other mother lived in Gingko Courtyard. He was very afraid of the mother that lived in Gingko Courtyard. He wanted to run away every time he saw her. When he was younger, this mother would cry every time she saw him. Later, when he grew older, she wanted to be nice to him. But, he didn't like the things that she tried to give him to eat. As soon as he refused, she would become very scary. Without saying a word, she would break the dishes on the table. Then, she would hold his shoulder and only ask him, "Did Qin-shi teach you these words?" After that, she would hold him in her arms, occasionally stroke his hair, and repeat these words, "Chang Mi, you're my son. Chang Mi..."

Deep down, Wei Chang Mi didn't consider her as his mother and didn't have any affection towards her. He only felt that she was very pitiful. His heart had only identified Qin-shi as his mother.

Li Xiang hadn't expected this result. Blocked, her tone became impatient, "Are you a fool? You recognize someone else as your mother and recognize Wei Luo as an older sister. Wei Luo isn't a good person. Don't be fooled by her."

On the side, Bai Lan finally couldn't continue only listening and walked forward to remind her, "Miss Li, please don't speak about my family's Miss this way."

Li Xiang turned her head to look at her. She raised her eyebrow and objected, "Did I say something wrong? How did my older brother get his injury? Was it not related to her? You probably participated with the letter that she wrote, right? You must have a clear understanding of her character. Why pretend like this in front of me..."

Angrily, Wei Chang Mi blew out his cheeks and lifted his fist to

firmly hit Li Xiang's arm, "Shut up! You're not allowed to say bad words about older sister Ah Luo."

Li Xiang frowned and said in dissatisfaction, "Are my words wrong? You can't even tell who your real sister is and you have the nerve to hit me?"

Wei Chang Mi was very upset. Drop by drop, tears fell from his face as he hit her with his fists, "It's not true. Your words aren't true..."

Li Xiang was annoyed by his actions. Although a young child's strength was small and his fists didn't hurt much, she couldn't tolerate another person being rude to her. She lifted her head, reflexively pushed him away, and warned him, "Stop before you go too far!"

Wei Chang Mi wasn't able to put up his guard in time and repeatedly recoiled a few steps. In the moment when he was about to fall to the ground, a pair of hands came out from behind him, caught him, and held him in her arms.

Wei Luo's hands were guarding Wei Chang Mi. She lifted her eyes to look at Li Xiang and coldly said, "Li Xiang, you're the one that should stop before you go too far."

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When Jin Lu has said Wei Chang Mi was here and had met Li Xiang, she knew that something would happen and had hurried over here. As expected, she saw this type of scene. How could Li Xiang not even let go of a six-year-old child? She was more despicable than she had imagined.

Liang Yu Rong and Zhao Jie were also here with Wei Luo. When Wei Chang Mi had originally disappeared, Liang Yu Rong had also helped with looking for him and had come here when she heard about Wei Chang Mi's location. Seeing Li Xiang bully a six-year-old child, she felt contempt for her.



However, Li Xiang didn't feel guilty. She looked at Wei Luo, then she looked at Wei Chang Mi, who was in her arms. She smiled and said, "You all just saw that I hadn't done anything. He hit me, so I pushed him."

Hearing these words, Wei Chang Mi turned around and cried into Wei Luo's chest, "She's a bad person... I only hit her because she said bad words about older sister Ah Luo..."

The sound of a child's crying sounded extremely pitiful.

Li Xiang lightly laughed instead of showing panic from hearing these words. Confident that justice was on her side, she asked, "I only told him the truth about his birth. That's probably not a secret, right? Should the truth be hidden from him?"

Wei Luo pursed her lips and glared at her without saying a word.

She had always thought that Li Xiang was shameless, but now she knew that she could be shameless to this degree. Li Xiang was one of a kind.

Wei Luo handed Wei Chang Mi over to Liang Yu Rong and walked forward to stand right in front of Li Xiang. She was one year older than Li Xiang and was also a bit taller than Li Xiang. When she looked at her, her eyes would be looking down at her from above as if she was occupying the higher ground. The corners of Wei Luo's lips were simply curved up into a smile, "You're right. This isn't a secret."

Li Xiang's face showed that she was proud of herself as she said, "Oh."

Shortly after, Wei Luo said, "Since you know so much, you can probably guess what I'm going to do next."

Li Xiang lifted her lips to object, "How could I know..."

The next moment, without waiting for her to finish her words, Wei Luo raised her hand and severely slapped Li Xiang!

The sound of the slap was heavy and loud.

Li Xiang was stunned for a long time. When she recovered her senses, she was ashamed and angry. She angrily glared at Wei Luo and raised her hand to slap her back!

Unfortunately for her, her arm was intercepted by someone in mid-air and she couldn't return the slap. Zhao Jie was in front of her. He held her arm and coldly and sternly said, "Li Xiang, stop."

His favoritism was too obvious. Wei Luo had clearly slapped Li Xiang, but he didn't show the slightest intention to admonish Wei Luo. In contrast, when Li Xiang raised her arm, before she even slapped Wei Luo, he hadn't been able to continue only watching.

Filled with anger and hate, Li Xiang stared at the two people and gritted her teeth.

Zhao Jie was her older cousin. They were related by blood, so how could he go against reason and help Wei Luo instead of her at this time?

## Chapter 63.3

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Until the celebration ended, Li Xiang stayed at the lotus pond. She didn't dare to go out and meet other people. There was a clear slap mark on her face. She didn't want other people to see and laugh at her.

She hid there until most of the guests had left, then she left this place.

Elder Princess Gao Yang had been anxiously waiting for her at the Duke Ding's residence entrance for a long time. She had ordered people to look for her two or three times before Li Xiang came out of the residence.

Li Xiang entered her family's carriage. Without any warning, she rushed into Elder Princess Gao Yang's arms and loudly cried. She complained about the grievances she had suffered today and narrated the Wei Luo's actions one by one. She lifted up her small face to show Elder Princess Gao Yang her face, "Mother, look, it's still swollen..."

Elder Princess Gao Yang carefully looked. Although it wasn't obvious, there was a slap mark. Her heart ached from seeing a mark on her daughter's flower-like face, "Why did Wei Luo hit you? Did you two have a falling out?"

Li Xiang grievously cried. Her tears continuously flowed, but she didn't forget to invert right and wrong. "She was completely unreasonable. After we had two words of disagreement, she threatened to teach me a lesson..."

This wasn't the first time that Elder Princess Gao Yang heard malicious words about Wei Luo from Li Xiang. From the time that Li Xiang returned from Jing He Villa, her hatred of Wei Luo had sunk into her bones. Last time, they had injured Wei Chang Hong. Now, Wei Luo had hit Li Xiang. The feeling that you had when someone else's child was injured was naturally different then when

your own child was hurt. Elder Princess Gao Yang's heart ached and felt displeased. She wanted to scold Wei Luo. However, after the hunting ceremony, Prince Ru Yang's and Duke Ying's families were in sharp opposition. The two families were like fire and water and couldn't co-exist. Since they were in the wrong first, even though they suffered a loss this time, it wouldn't be good for her to speak.

Elder Princess Gao Yang sighed. Just as she was about to speak, a person outside hurriedly lifted the carriage's curtain. With a face full of panic, he said, "Elder Princess, young master's arm was broken by someone and he's also suffering other serious injuries!"

Elder Princess Gao Yang only felt her body becoming weak and the scene in front of her darkening. With a trembling voice, she asked, "What did you say?"

Song-er was injured? How could this be possible? He was skilled in martial art. A normal person couldn't even injure him. How could he be seriously injured?!

That servant responded, "This servant couldn't find young master, so I borrowed people from Duke Ding's residence to look for him together. Later, I found young master at the side of the bamboo forest. Not only was young master's wrist broken, his body also has other serious and minor injuries."

As if she had heard thunder on a clear sky, Elder Princesses was too shocked to speak. The scene in front of her felt hazy and her limbs felt cold.

Soon, three people carried Li Song onto the black, flat roofed carriage. They placed him onto a cotton-padded mattress and retreated. There was only paleness on Li Song's face. However, when Elder Princess Gao Yang opened his sky blue robes, she saw green and purple bruises on his chest, even his back had bruises. Some were serious and some were light. The most serious injury was his left wrist. It had been bent into an odd curvature.

In the end, Zhu Geng had shown him a little bit of kindness. He hadn't been utterly ruthless. He had only broken one wrist instead of both of them.

Li Xiang forgot about crying. Aghast, she called out, "Older brother!"

Elder Princess Gao Yang saw her seriously injured son and her heartache couldn't be increased any further. She covered her mouth and bent down to weep. She quickly ordered the driver to hurry back to Prince Ru Yang's residence.

When they arrived at Prince Ru Yang's residence, Li Song was carefully carried inside.

The servants hurriedly went to invite a doctor to the residence. Elder Princess Gao Yang asked the doctor to examine and treat Li Song's injuries. This torment took two hours. After the doctor looked over Li Song's injuries, applied the medicine and bandaged his wounds, and added a board to Li Song's left wrist before bandaging to set his bone, and stroked his own beard, he finally said, "Properly tend to his healing. It will take about a hundred days for his bone to knit and his tendons to heal. During the next three month, he can't move his wrist. If he does, it'll hinder his healing."

In addition, the doctor also wrote two prescriptions. One was for external injuries. The other was to nurse his internal injuries.

Elder Princess Gao Yang sadly wiped her tears. After she thanked the doctor, she ordered the servants to thank him with large monetary gift before sending him off.

She didn't know who had such a deep hatred of Li Song to and would want to hurt him this badly.

Li Zhi Liang had already brought people with him to Duke Ding's residence to search that bamboo forest. No matter what, the culprit had to be found. Once the culprit was found, she definitely

wouldn't let that person off!

It was probably because she had cried too much. Elder Princess Gao Yang's body felt weak and she fainted soon after.

Li Xiang hurriedly had the servants bring her mother back to her room so she could have a good rest.

After she had sent off Elder Princess Gao Yang, there was only her and Li Song left in the room. Li Song's eyes were closed as he lied on the bed. His handsome eyebrows were wrinkled. He wasn't sleeping peacefully. Perhaps, it was because of the pain.

Li Xiang stood next to his bed for a while, then she leaned over to tuck in his blanket. As she was lifting his uninjured arm to put inside his blanket, she suddenly paused. She felt that there was something inside his hand. She lifted up his sleeve, lowered her head to look, and saw that his hand was holding a golden hairpin. There were emeralds inlaid in the hairpin. It looked expensive. A single glance told her that it belonged to a wealthy family's daughter.

She gasped in surprise. And also curiously wondered, why did her older brother have this item?

She reached out her hand to bring it towards her for a closer look. However, despite her attempts at pulling, she couldn't pull it out.

Li Song was tightly holding the hairpin and she couldn't loosen his grip on it.

## Chapter 64.1

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On the eighth day of March, Duke Ying's family travelled outside the capital to burn incense in worship at a temple.

The sky was clear and a favorable wind blew today. It was suitably good weather for traveling. Wei Luo saw that Wei Chang Hong had been feeling stuffy at home the past few days, so she also brought him with her to stroll around and breathe in the fresh air. Wei Chang Hong's injury had already improved a lot under Wei Luo's meticulous care. The wound had already scabbed. Once that piece of scab came off, he would be considered completely healed.

Wei Chang Yin had also come on this trip with first madam. He hadn't shown his face in a long time. Now, that he suddenly appeared in everyone's sight, it felt strange and rare.

Wei Chang Yin was sitting in a beech wheelchair. He was wearing a black and green robe with a flower pattern. His graceful and handsome figure looked clear and pure. He didn't seem to have changed during the past several years. His eyebrows were still elegant and simple. There was still a gentle smile on his lips. His gentleness was the same towards everyone. The servant boy behind him pushed his wheelchair outside to the entrance and stopped at the carriages. First madam came out of her carriage and whispered something to him. He looked down and the side of his face was handsome as he seriously listened.

It was truly a pity. If his leg wasn't damaged, he would look so magnificent.

Liang Yu Rong lifted the embroidered curtain to look outside and couldn't help sighing, "Ah Luo, is your oldest cousin's leg not healed yet? Is there a possibility that his leg can be treated?"

A few days ago, Liang Yu Rong had heard they were going to a temple, so she said she also wanted to come. Liang Yu was preparing to participate in next year's military imperial exam.

Liang Yu Rong wanted to help him by praying to Buddha for him to score first place in the exam. At the time, Wei Luo didn't think anything of her request. It was only adding another person, so she easily agreed.

Now, she was somewhat regretful. If she had known that Wei Chang Yin was also going, no matter what, she wouldn't have let Liang Yu Rong come too!

She vividly remembered their endings in her previous life. If Wei Chang Yin's leg didn't heal, they wouldn't have any good outcome. Rather than have a painful ending, it would be better if those two didn't interact to begin with, so they wouldn't develop any feelings that they shouldn't have.

In this life, Wei Luo had done her best to prevent them meeting and had done a good job during the past few years. Wei Chang Yin normally didn't come out to meet people. As long as she was careful, Liang Yu Rong wouldn't even have the chance to see his face. Until now, the two of them didn't have much interaction with each other, so Liang Yu Rong would naturally not fall in love with Wei Chang Yin.

It was really beyond her expectations for the two of them to go to the temple to burn incense together today.

Wei Luo had her put down the curtain and responded, "He probably won't get better... I heard from eldest aunt that she's already looked for many doctors and none of them were able to treat his leg." After saying this, she picked up the peanuts on the small vermilion lacquered table, then she stuffed them into Liang Yu Rong's hand, "Don't look. Eat peanuts. After we arrive at the bottom of the mountain to Qian Temple, there will be a long mountain path to climb."

Qian Temple was outside the capital and was on a high mountain. That mountain was very steep and the carriages wouldn't be able to go up. If they wanted to go to Qian Temple, they



would have to personally climb up the mountain. In spite of this, there was still an endless stream of people going to Qian Temple. The worshippers were as numerous as the clouds.

It was probably because the Buddha there was very effective. There was also a senior monk that achieved enlightenment. According to rumors, this highly intelligent senior monk was very experienced and knowledgeable. If you were fortunate enough to get pointers from this senior monk, then your path would be smooth regardless of the path you later decide to take.

Unfortunately, this senior monk had poor health and would only meet with one worshipper each day, so it wasn't easy to meet with him.

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When the group of people arrived at the foot of Qiao Temple's mountain, they didn't have any other choice than to leave their carriages and walk up the steps.

Wei Chang Yin's leg made it unsuitable for him to walk. He could only have a servant carry him up the mountain. Initially, Wei Chang Yin didn't feel anything. When they had walked halfway up, Liang Yu Rong enviously looked at Wei Chang Yin's back and sighed with regret, "There's an advantage to not being able to walk."

Most of the people here were women and children that were raised in boudoirs. They rarely left their homes and seldom walked such a long mountain path. The majority of these people were already exhausted and it was only stubbornness that allowed them to continue walking. Seeing Wei Chang Yin's being carried by someone, it was normal for people to feel envious.

It was only that this girl's words were too heartless.

Wei Luo looked at her in rebuke, then she shook her head and continued walking, "If eldest aunt heard your words, she would

definitely be angry."

This was the truth. First madam's hair had turned white over worrying about Wei Chang Yin's leg. Liang Yu Rong had actually said these words out loud. It was truly a fortunate person not being aware of her good fortune.

In front of them, Wei Chang Hong stopped walking. He waited until Wei Luo had reached him, then he lifted his sleeve to wipe the sweat on her forehead, "Ah Luo, are you tired? Do you want me to carry you?"

Wei Luo was really tired, but she cared more about not exhausting Chang Hong, so after a moment of struggle, she still shook her head.

After walking the time it would take an incense to burn, Wei Luo's sore legs were limp and she walked slower and slower. When she looked up, there was a towering stairway in front of her. She still couldn't see Qian Temple. She walked forward with a bit of despair. She had already walked an hour and she still wasn't there. How much longer would she have to walk?

Wei Chang Hong saw that she was exhausted. Without saying anything, he crouched down in front of her, "Get on, I'll carry you. I'm not afraid of being tired."

This time, Wei Luo didn't refuse. No longer being polite, she climbed onto his back, wrapped her arms around his neck, and smilingly whispered, "Chang Hong, you're really good."

Wei Chang showed a faint smile, raised her up a little bit higher, and walked forward while carrying her.

Behind them, Liang Yu Rong was admiring and jealous. She blew out her cheeks. Unwilling to admit defeat, she said, "If I had known earlier, I would have told my older brother to come here too..."

Two hours later, the group of people finally arrived at the top of

the mountain. There were two monks standing at Qian Temple's entrance. They good-naturedly led them into the center of the temple. First madam had ordered people here in advance, so their rooms were already prepared in the temple. Each person had a room that had been thoroughly cleaned.

This time, first madam had come here for Wei Chang Yin's leg. She wanted to ask the senior monk for advice. Was there a method to fix Wei Chang Yin's leg? If there was, where should she go to seek medical treatment or what method should she use? Unfortunately, the senior monk already had someone he was going to meet today. If she wanted to meet the senior monk, she would have to wait until tomorrow. In addition, even if she waited until tomorrow, she still might not see him. She would have to go to the main hall to draw lots tomorrow. Only the person who drew the winning bamboo stick would have the opportunity to meet the senior monk.

In other words, they might not be able to meet the senior monk even after the long trip here.

First Madam probably already knew this rule before she came here, but she still persisted with coming here. She probably made the determination that she wouldn't leave here until she met the senior monk.

## Chapter 64.2

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At the back of Qian Temple, Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong's rooms were adjacent and only separated by a wall.

Liang Yu Rong had gone to main hall to burn incense. Wei Luo returned to her room to rest.

She didn't know why. Her entire body had felt a bit uncomfortable and weak since this morning. Her waist and legs ached. She couldn't raise her energy levels no matter what she did. She lied down on the bed to rest for a while. Not much later, Jin Lu brought her a cup of tea. The discomfort in her body was somewhat alleviated after she drank the tea. Seeing that Liang Yu Rong hadn't returned yet, she sat up, and wanted to go the main hall to see what was happening there.

Logically, burning incense in worship didn't take much time. Liang Yu Rong had already been there for an hour. Why hadn't she returned?

Could she have met Wei Chang Ying? As soon as she thought of this possibility, Wei Luo wanted to rush over there to stop that from happening.

Wei Luo left the room with Bai Lan. After they passed through a long verandah and detoured a moon gate, they would see the main hall in front of them.

The hallway they were passing through had many doors. Each door was decorated the same way. If there weren't a different word written on each door, it would be difficult to differentiate the doors. After they passed the door marked "Earth", and had just walked in front of the door marked "Sky", the door was pushed open from the inside. A person leisurely walked out.

It was a monk wearing a kasaya. He looked about sixty years old. He had a round face and an especially bright pair of eyes. Although

he was old, his vitality was hale and hearty. A single glance would show that he was different from ordinary people. Wei Luo greeted him. He held up his palm and good-naturedly bent his waist to salute her. Wei Luo followed by repeating his actions. When she looked up, another person came out of the room. After she clearly saw his figure, she was slightly surprised for a moment and blurted out, "Big brother?"

Zhao Jie was wearing an indigo robe with a python pattern as he walked out of the room. He and Qian Temple's senior monk, Abbot Qing Wang, had a somewhat friendly relationship. He had come here today because he had some misgivings that he was hoping Abbot Qing Wang could answer for him. They had sat inside the room for almost an hour. After he finished asking his questions, as he was preparing to leave, he unexpectedly met this girl here.

He lifted his lips and faintly smiled, "Ah Luo, why are you here?"

Wei Luo pointed at the main hall, "I came here with first aunt and fourth aunt. First aunt had something she wanted to ask Buddha." As she said this, her eyes turned and saw Abbot Qing Wang who had already walked far away. She curiously asked, "Is he this temple's senior monk? How was big brother able to meet him?"

Zhao Jie held back his laughter and answered her question with another question, "Do you also have something that you want him to solve?"

She shook her head and frankly said, "First madam wanted to meet the senior monk to ask about older cousin Wei Chang Yin's leg."

Zhao Jie already knew that her oldest cousin was suffering from an illness in his leg. He calmly nodded without any changes in his emotion.

Wei Luo knew that it wasn't easy to meet the senior monk, so she didn't put Zhao Jie in a difficult spot. She casually asked, "Is big

brother staying in a guest room? When did you come? When are you preparing to leave?"

Zhao Jie had originally planned on leaving the mountain after talking to Abbot Qing Wang. Now, hearing her asking him, he immediately changed his mind. He smiled and said, "I'll leave here tomorrow."

She didn't have the slight suspicion about his reply and even kindly reminded him, "Oh. I heard there's a peach tree grove behind Qian Temple and it's currently the time for the peach flowers to blossom. If big brother isn't busy, you can go there to look at the peach blossoms."

Seeing that she had been delayed for too long and worried that she wouldn't be in time to stop Liang Yu Rong and Wei Chang Yin from starting their mistake, she said, "I'm going to go look for first aunt and fourth aunt. Good-bye, big brother." Then she turned around and walked forward.

After saying this, she didn't wait for his response and walked away.

Zhao Jie stood there for a while watching the back of her figure. Today, she was wearing a moon white jacket with Su style embroidery and a skirt embroidered with white butterflies. Bright red peony flowers were also blooming on her skirt. The flowers slowly and elegantly swayed from the movement of her steps.

As Zhao Jie continued looking, he suddenly frowned.

On the back of Wei Luo's skirt, there was a hidden patch of blood. Although the blood wasn't obvious because it had blended with the surrounding flower petals, he had been carefully looking and it wasn't difficult for him to notice.

His expression froze. Walking forward with long strides, he reached her in a few steps, "Ah Luo!"

# Chapter 65.1

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Fortunately, Wei Luo's walking speed wasn't fast. He reached her in a few steps.

Hearing his footsteps, Wei Luo stopped. Confused, she turned around to look at him, "Big brother, did you want to say something else?"

Zhao Jie stood in front of her and looked at her delicate white face. This was the first time he experienced having something to say, but was unable to speak. How should he tell her? His little girl had grown up. She had her first period. He should probably be happy for her, but he felt a little bit worried. Growing up meant she was maturing. The flower bud was blossoming into a beautiful flower. She would only become more and more beautiful. Her beauty would attract everyone's attention.

It was already difficult now. She was still young and she had already attracted Li Song and Song Hui. Wouldn't he worry even more when she grew matured?

He couldn't help but continue to think further. Should he watch over her more carefully in the future? She could only belong to him. He had watched her slowly grow up as if she was a delicate flower that he had personally nurtured, watered, and fertilized. He had finally waited until his flower had blossomed today. He was the only one that could pluck this flower. No one else could touch her.

Zhao Jie only looked at her without speaking. Wei Luo inevitably felt slightly anxious, "What do you want to say?"

He returned to his senses and looked at the servant girl next to Wei Luo. Without changing his expression, he called Wei Luo to his side, "I recently picked up a sachet. Look and see if it's yours."

Hearing these words, Wei Luo walked closer. Half way, she

remembered that wasn't carrying a sachet today. How could it be hers? Just as she was about to speak, she saw Zhao Jie taking out a sachet. To be cooperative, she simply picked up the green jade sachet with an ornamental lotus pattern from his hand to look, then she shook her head and said, "It's not mine. Big brother, this looks like a man's sachet?"

Zhao Jie's expression didn't change and he had her continue to look, "Do you recognize the spices inside the sachet?"

Jin Lu was standing behind them and patiently waiting. First, she looked behind Zhao Jie, then she look at the pillars on the side, and finally her gaze fell on Wei Luo. As she looked, a strange expression appeared on her face. She carefully looked at Wei Luo's skirt and finally determined what she was seeing. Her face suddenly froze before her nervousness showed. She temporarily forgot the rules and called out in panic, "Miss!"

It wasn't a strange thing for a woman to have a period and for some of the blood to seep through her clothing. However, they were in a public place right now. It would be too embarrassing if outsiders saw! This was Wei Luo's first period, so she didn't notice. Also, in her previous life, she didn't get her first period until she was fourteen. Since it had started a year earlier, she was naturally caught off guard.

Wei Luo was currently trying to figure out which spices were inside the sachet. Hearing Jin Lu shouting, she turned around to ask, "What's so urgent?"

Big problem! Extremely big problem! Jin Lu didn't know if anyone else had also seen it on the way here. Jin Lu carefully thought. Other than Zhao Jie and Abbot Qing Wang, they didn't meet anyone else after the leaving the room. Abbot Qing Wang probably didn't see anything. As for Zhao Jie... his expression seemed calm and natural. He probably didn't see anything, right?

Thinking of it that way, Jin Lu sighed in relief. Before His



Highness Prince Jing and other people notice, she had to hurry with bringing Miss back to her room!

Jin Lu walked forward, quickly thought of a reason, ashamedly said, "This servant suddenly remembered that I forgot to bring something. Miss, could you accompany me back?"

Wei Luo blinked and subconsciously asked, "What thing?"

Jin Lu couldn't figure out a reply. After she stammered for a while, she finally said with a red face, "A very important thing!"

Oh. Since Jin Lu said it like that, Wei Luo reluctantly agreed. She handed the sachet back to Zhao Jie. Before she left, she didn't forget to tell him, "There's sandalwood and dahurian angelica inside this bag. I don't recognize the other spices. If big brother wants to know, I'll ask Auntie Han for you when I go home." Before she had time to say good-bye, Jin Lu rushed her into leaving and they left in the direction of her room.

Jin Lu was worried that other people would see the blood on Wei Luo's skirt, so she deliberately walked behind her the entire time to block other people's line of sight.

Zhao Jie stood beneath at the verandah for a long time. He held the sachet and watched Wei Luo's back that gradually went further and further away. His dark eyes were deep and his expression was unfathomable.

Of course she wouldn't recognize this sachet. This was his sachet.

He stopped looking. His lips slowly curved into a faint smile. He was born with long eyebrows and had a handsome appearance. Normally, his expression was cold. Even when he laughed, other people felt an aura of oppression from him. But, at the current moment, his laughter was joyful. His phoenix eyes were gentle, his smile was cheerful, and he looked especially good-looking.

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At the back of the temple, in a guest room.

Wei Luo had been inexplicably brought back here by Jin Lu. Standing in her room, she asked, "Jin Lu, what did you forget to bring?"

Jin Lu walked into the inner room and took out a set of clean clothes from her bag. Soon after, she came out of the inner room, put away the nervous look from before, smiled, and pointed out to Wei Luo, "Miss, look at the back of your skirt."

Wei Luo scrunched up her eyebrows. What was Jin Lu thinking? Wei Luo turned her head and after a moment, she saw the blood that had already dried. Her small face froze for a moment before finally understanding why Jin Lu had rushed her back. So her period had come! No wonder her body had felt sore and weak the entire day.

After she understood, she couldn't help thinking. Zhao Jie had also been there. Did Zhao Jie also see? Would he laugh at her? In her previous life, didn't her first period come when she was fourteen, why was it so early in this life?

Seeing Wei Luo's unhappy expression, Jin Lu quickly guessed what she was thinking and hurried to comfort her, "His Highness Prince Jing probably didn't see. This servant had checked his expression just then. His expression was very natural without the slightest peculiarity."

After saying this, she brought Wei Luo into the inner room and unfolded the moon white and pale yellow robe. As she helped Wei Luo change clothes, she sighed with emotion, "Miss has already grown up. You're an adult now."

## Chapter 65.2

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Hearing that Zhao Jie didn't see, Wei Luo's face slightly cleared up and her heart calmed down. Unlike Jin Lu, she didn't feel emotional about her period.

She had already experience this before and didn't feel there was any need to be emotional. A woman would have a period every month. It showed that she had grown up and could have children. Fortunately, Jin Lu had brought cotton cloth with them this morning just in case. Now, it would be put to good use. Jin Lu took out the cotton cloth and showed her how to use it. She had already used this item in her previous life, so naturally she learned how to use it again very quickly.

After everything was put into order, with her mind at ease, Wei Luo finally arrived at the main hall.

Inside the main hall, there was a mother and a daughter kneeling in front of a distinguishing and awe-inspiring Buddha statue. They were quietly asking for Buddha's blessings. Wei Luo looked left and right. She didn't see Liang Yu Rong. She inevitably felt somewhat anxious and her eyebrows furrowed.

Liang Yu Rong didn't return to her room and she wasn't in the main hall. Where did she go?

Actually, she didn't go anywhere. Liang Yu Rong had only gone to the smaller hall behind this one to listen to a monk lecture about Buddhist scriptures. Wei Luo was just too nervous. Liang Yu Rong had almost never spoken to Wei Chang Yin before. She couldn't fall in love with him in a single day, right?

Liang Yu Rong was properly kneeling on the praying mat. The monk's lecture of difficult to understand Buddhist scriptures lingered around her ears. She became sleepier and sleepier as she listened. Before, she didn't have anything to do so she had come here with the crowd. Now, she wanted to leave, but felt slightly

embarrassed. She turned her head to look at Wei Chang Yin in his wheelchair and only saw that his gaze was peaceful. They were in the same place, but he was able to be calm and elegant. He seriously listened to the abbot speak classical scriptures without the slightest impatience.

Liang Yu Rong could only withdraw her gaze, piously sit back in her original position, copy his calm appearance, and stop looking around.

However, she still couldn't reach his state of mind. As she kneeled, she gradually became sleepier. Her head swayed and she almost fell asleep.

Just as she was about to fall asleep, a slender hand appeared in front of her. There was a piece of malt sugar candy in the palm. She instantly became clear-headed from surprise. She looked over there and saw Wei Chang Yin. There was faint smile on his face. Handing her a candy, the meaning didn't need to be explained.

She wasn't bashful. She picked up the candy and put it into her mouth. The sugar melted and the sweetness that filled her mouth decreased her sleepiness. She obediently continued kneeling there until without knowing, she finished eating the candy. After a while, she turned her head to look at Wei Chang Yin. Her dark limpid eyes blinked at him. That gaze was clearly asking, "Do you have anymore?"

Wei Chang Yin faintly smiled, reached inside his sleeve that was decorated with an eight-treasure pattern embroidered in golden thread, took out a bag that contained candy wrapped in oil paper, and handed it over to her. He wasn't against sweet foods and would occasionally carry a few pieces of candy with him. When he was feeling impatient or irritable, he would eat a piece of candy to calm himself down. Seeing that this girl wasn't calm, he had taken out a piece of candy to calm her. He hadn't expected that it would be so effective.

After she had the malted sugar candy, Liang Yu Rong really stopped dozing and looking around. By chance, the monk finished his lecture right when she finished the bag of candy.

Walking out of the small hall, Liang Yu Rong caught up with the wooden wheelchair, "Older brother Chang Yin!"

Hearing her voice, Wei Chang Yin indicated for the servant to the stop pushing the wheelchair.

She stopped at his side and handed back his bag. Her eyes curved and she smilingly asked him, "I ate all of your candy. The next time we meet, I'll give you candy too. What type of candy do you like? Malted sugar candy?"

A smile appeared on Wei Chang Yin's handsome and scholarly face, "Anything is fine."

Anything is fine? So he didn't have any preference on the type of candy she bought? She had a keen interest about this area and quickly thought of something, "I know that Ba Zhen has a really a delicious milk candy with fruit stuffing. It's sweet without being greasy. Do you want to try that? I'll buy it for you as compensation, okay?"

As she said this, one after another, the worshippers left the hall. If they stayed here, they would block other people's path. She very naturally went behind Wei Chang Yin and started to push his wheelchair forward.

This scene was very familiar. She suddenly remembered there was a similar scene from her childhood. It was snowing that day. He was sitting underneath a cypress tree by himself and powdery white snow was falling on his head. She had walked forward and wanted to help him push his wheelchair. Unfortunately, she was too weak and couldn't push it even after many attempts. Now, she had grown up. Although it would be strenuous to push, she would be able to do it now.

Wei Chang Yin tried to stop her, "You won't be able to push the wheelchair. Let's have a servant do it."

Liang Yu Rong slowly pushed him forward. She shook her head and said, "You're not heavy. It won't be strenuous to push you."

Wei Chang Yin paused and didn't continue to speak.

After they had walked for a while, the main hall was in front of them. He hadn't answered her question from earlier, so she asked again, "Older brother Chang Yin, I'll buy you candy from Ba Zhen, okay?"

He chuckled. This time, he nodded, "Okay."

Then, we agreed. Liang Yu Rong said, "I'll buy it another day, I'll have Ah Luo pass it on to you." She thought about and didn't feel at ease, "I don't know if Ah Luo will secretly eat it..."

## Chapter 66.1

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At the main hall's entrance, as soon as Wei Luo saw Liang Yu Rong pushing Wei Chang Yin over here, she felt discouraged from the turn of events.

She strived to stop this for so long, but what was meant to be, will always happen in the end.

Liang Yu Rong and Wei Chang Yin were approaching closer to her.

Liang Yu Rong properly called him, "Older brother." Wei Chang Yin nodded, said a few words with her, and instead of lingering here, he called a servant to bring back to his room.

Liang Yu Rong watched Wei Chang Yin leave, then she walked to Wei Luo's side, and doubtfully said, "Ah Luo, I thought you were feeling unwell. Why did you still come here?"

Wei Luo's expression was solemn. She answered her question with another question, "Where did you go with my eldest cousin?"

Liang Yu Rong pointed at the small hall. Seeing that Wei Luo was deadly earnest, she thought that something serious had happened, so she frankly said, "We went there to listen to a monk speak about scriptures." She pulled Wei Luo towards the direction of their rooms and jabbered her complaints, "Those scriptures were really hard to comprehend. I almost fell asleep while listening."

They slowly walked on the limestone-paved path. The guest rooms at the back of the temple were far away from the front courtyard. On the way back, they saw monks wearing simple robes with yellow silk waistbands. The monks would put their palms together in greeting when they saw them. They also properly returned the monks' greetings.

They arrived at the guest rooms. Wei Luo stopped at her room's door, then she turned her head and asked, "Eldest cousin Chang

Yin also gave you candy?"

Liang Yu Rong smiled and nodded. She thought that Wei Luo didn't believe her, so she took out the oil paper that she had neatly folded to show that she hadn't lied, "I decided to give older brother Chang Yin a bag of candy in return. Ah Luo, after I buy it, help me by delivering it to him, okay?"

Without even thinking about it, Wei Luo blurted out, "No."

Liang Yu Rong was stunned. She thought that Wei Luo would definitely agree, but Wei Luo had refused without hesitation. At a complete loss, she asked, "Why?"

Why? Of course, it was because it would better if those two had less contact. Since they didn't have many feelings for each other yet, this was time to resolutely make a decision in order to avoid sorrow in the future. Wei Luo pushed open her door, walked inside, "Eldest cousin Chang Yin lives in Banyan Courtyard and rarely comes out. I also rarely see him. It won't be easy to deliver the candy to him."

This reason was really too half-hearted. Who would believe it? They live in the same residence. How could it be difficult for them to see each other? In the end, Wei Luo just didn't want to help her! Liang Yu Rong puffed out her cheeks and stared at the back of Wei Luo's head. Slightly angry, she said, "If you don't help me, then I'll deliver it to him myself!"

Wei Luo stamped her feet, then she carefully thought about the words she would say. If she helped Liang Yu Rong deliver the candy, the two of them wouldn't meet at least. If Liang Yu Rong delivered the candy herself, it was more likely than not that something would happen between them. If she looked at it that way, it would be safer if she helped her.

Wei Luo turned back midway and conceded, "Okay, I'll help you deliver it."



Liang Yu Rong immediately smiled and happily thanked her.

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There was a peach tree grove behind Qian Temple that occupied more than half of the mountainside. Wei Luo had seen it on the way here in the carriage. The blossoming peach flowers were beautiful and would charm people into confusion.

She had already discussed with Liang Yu Rong in advance. After they eaten the food with the monks at noon, when everyone was resting in the temple, they would stroll around in the peach tree grove. After lunch was over, Wei Luo arranged everything properly. Just as they was preparing to leave, when she pushed open her door to go outside, she saw that Liang Yu Rong had also invited Wei Chang Yin!

Wei Chang Yin and Wei Chang Hong were together underneath a nearby banyan tree. One was gentle and refined. The other was tall and handsome.

Liang Yu Rong led Wei Luo forward. In her heart, Wei Luo wasn't willing, but this feeling wasn't shown on her face. She forced herself to smile as she asked, "Why did eldest cousin Chang Yin also come?"

Liang Yu Rong's hands were behind her back. She explained with a smile, "I was the one that invited older brother Chang Yin. I heard that older brother Chang Yin usually stays at home and rarely goes out, so I wanted to bring him with us to look at the peach blossoms.

At noon, on the path from leaving the main hall, Liang Yu Rong had invited Wei Chang Yin to go to the rear mountain with them. At that time, Wei Chang Yin had declined. He didn't want to bother them while they were having fun. But, Liang Yu Rong wasn't discouraged. What did she say to get him to come?

Oh, she said, "How do you know that you'll bother us? Does older

brother Chang Yin not want to come because he dislikes us and think we'll bother him? I heard that you like peacefulness. Actually, we're not noisy either. You'll know if you come with us this one time. The peach flowers only blossom once a year. By lucky coincidence, we were able to get here in time. It would be a pity to not look at them."

Like Wei Luo, she had been clever and eloquent since she was a child and could change someone's mind in a few sentences.

Hearing her words, Wei Chang Yin could only laugh. The sound of his laughter made a person feel at ease. In the end, he agreed.

Now, he was sitting in his wheelchair with a calm face. There was a smile on his handsome face, "Yu Rong said that peach flowers on the mountain were blossoming well, so I came here without an invitation. Does Ah Luo not welcome me?"

Liang Yu Rong was standing at the side. Her bright smiling expression showed that she was clearly in a very good mood.

In this type of situation, could Wei Luo say the words "not welcome"? She nodded and against her own feelings, she said, "How could that be possible? Of course, I welcome eldest cousin to come with us."

After pondering for a moment, he smiled and said, "It's not early anymore. Let's just go."

The group of people walked towards the back of the temple. The peach tree grove wasn't far from Qian Temple. They each only took a servant girl or boy.

Wei Luo was walking at the back of the group. She looked at the people in front of her and was lost in her thoughts.

Liang Yu Rong had a glib tongue and an easy-going temperament. A person wouldn't feel bored or depressed in her company. Her personality was very complementary with Wei Chang Yin's. One was witty and lively. The other was gentle and calm. As she was

speaking, Wei Chang Yin peacefully listened to her on the side. The picture from behind was also very beautiful. If they weren't destined to an unhappy ending, they would be really a good pair.

Wei Luo recalled the memories from her previous life.

She had just returned to Duke Ying's residence to find her relatives and had been driven away by Du-shi and Wei Zheng before entering the residence. She could only hide near the corner gate and wait for Wei Kun to return home. Later, she wasn't able to meet Wei Kun. Instead, she met Liang Yu Rong.

At that time, the marquis and his wife had already arranged a marriage for Liang Yu Rong with another person. But Liang Yu Rong's heart couldn't give up on Wei Chang Yin, so she came to Duke Ying's residence to see him. Wei Chang Yin never appeared. She stubbornly and persistently stood at the corner gate while silently crying. She kept crying and crying. It was probably because she felt too hopeless, so in the end, she crouched down and curled up into a ball. Her body kept twitching. She had normally been a carefree person, but now she didn't have any smiles left. She was only left with numbness and empty of all hope.

In the end, she wasn't able to keep waiting until she saw Wei Chang Yin. At dusk, people from Marquis Ping Yuan's residence took her back.

If they were doomed to an unhappy ending, then no matter what, Wei Luo couldn't let her fall in love with Wei Chang Yin.

## Chapter 66.2

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After they walked through Qian Temple's back gate, there was a small descending path. There were brambles on both sides of the path and only the center of the path was safe for walking. Fortunately, this path was rather flat and wasn't too narrow. The path would be able to accommodate two people if they were walking shoulder to shoulder.

Wei Luo walked closed to Liang Yu Rong the entire way and wouldn't let her come in contact with Wei Chang Yin. Fortunately, Liang Yu Rong didn't have the slightest suspicion and their stroll could be counted as smooth.

About an hour later, their horizon widened. Not far away, there was a grove of trees with blossoming peach flowers. The light pink petals were gorgeous. At first glance, the scene resembled a painted scroll that was painted in thick ink and bright colors. As they approached and entered the peach tree grove, flower petals continuously fluttered down. Blown by the wind, the flower petals spiraled in front of them and they were hit by the fragrance of the flowers.

A flower petal fell onto Wei Luo's head. Chang Hong lifted his hand to pick it off. As he looked at her, he asked, "Ah Luo, are you not feeling well?"

Her face didn't look good. Her lips were pale and it seemed as if she was enduring an enormous pain.

Indeed, Wei Luo really wasn't feeling well. She had overestimated herself. Today was the first day of her period and her body was very weak. She had already climbed such a long mountain path this morning, then she used up a lot of energy to walk down to here. She was exhausted and her stomach hurt dreadfully. She whimpered and had Jin Lu support her with walking to the small pavilion in front of them. "I'm slightly tired..."

I'm going to sit here to rest for a bit."

But she didn't look like she was only "slightly tired". She sat down on the stone bench inside the pavilion. Her head was drooping and she looked unhappy.

Wei Chang Hong nervously followed her here and asked, "Are you really only slightly tired? You're not feeling uncomfortable anywhere?"

She nodded, closed her eyes, and muttered, "Really... Go look for eldest cousin to play with. I'll be fine after resting here for a bit."

Wei Chang Hong frowned. He wasn't willing to leave. "You're not feeling well. I'll stay here to keep you company."

It would be too shameful to tell him about such a private thing. Wei Luo firmly pushed him out. Wei Chang Hong didn't have any other options. He could only shake his head to show that he didn't like this idea before leaving.

After she was the only left in the pavilion, Jin Lu attentively asked, "Miss, this servant has brought ginger tea. Do you want to drink a cup of tea to feel warmer? It's chillier on mountains. Or is it hurting because of the cold air?"

Seeing that she didn't object, Jin Lu carried over a food box decorated with red, autumn plum flowers, opened the box, took out the warm tea from inside, poured it into a rose patterned tea cup, and brought it over to her. "It's still warm. Miss, drink it while it's still warm."

At this time, Wei Luo couldn't think of any reasons for her to leave when they had just recently arrived here. As soon as she thought about how she would have to walk uphill if she wanted to go back, she felt that life was meaningless. She took the teacup and slowly sipped the tea until it was finished. In the end, she leaned over the table. One hand covered her stomach and the other hand cushioned her head. She closed her eyes to recuperate until she

regained her composure.

During this period, Liang Yu Rong had also come here twice to look at her. Seeing that she was in a poor condition, Liang Yu Rong didn't bother her. No one could help with this type of thing. Early this year, Liang Yu Rong also had her first period. One time, she didn't pay attention to the cold weather and also felt this painful. She really empathized with Wei Luo's pain.

Wei Luo's body gradually became warmer from drinking the ginger tea. Her pain was somewhat alleviated and it didn't hurt as much as when it first started. With her eyes closed, she thought about resting here for a while before leaving. Suddenly, there was a warm hand on her forehead checking her temperature.

That slender hand was strong and healthy. She immediately knew it was a man's hand. She thought it was Chang Hong's hand, so she quietly whimpered and buried her head in the crook of the man's arm. She softly and weakly said, "Chang Hong, don't move... I don't feel well."

The hand paused in mid-air. Shortly after, instead of taking back his hand, he touched and rubbed her ear and said in soothing and sweet tone, "What's wrong? Little one, is your body feeling uncomfortable?"

This voice...

She looked up and saw a pair of eyes that seemed to be smiling. It was really Zhao Jie! She asked in surprise, "Big brother, why did you come here too? When did you get here?"

Zhao Jie very naturally sat down next to her, rested his chin on his hand, and said, "Didn't you say there was a peach tree grove behind the temple and the blossoming peach flowers were beautiful? By chance, this prince wasn't busy and came here to see them."

She honestly blurted out, "Oh, I forgot."

Her condition wasn't good today and her mind wasn't thinking fast. It was normal that she didn't immediately remember her previous words.

Zhao Jie raised his eyebrows, thought of Wei Luo's wilted and drowsy appearance when he first came here, thoughtfully looked at her, and asked again, "Are you not feeling well?"

Wei Luo pursed her lips. Her tender cheeks became slightly red. She didn't want to tell him. After all, it wasn't easy to speak about this type of truth, so she quickly thought of an excuse, "I was too tired from walking down, so I came here to rest for a while."

Zhao Jie's dark eyes captured the shyness that flashed over her face and thought of the red smear he had seen on her skirt this morning. He could guess what was wrong and only calmly curved his lips. There were many things that women found embarrassing to mention. He wouldn't force her to talk about this issue.

No far away, Liang Yu Rong was pushing Wei Chang Yin's wheelchair and walking underneath the peach trees. The wheelchair rolled over the ground that was sprinkled with flower petals and embedded the flowers into the soil so that even the soil became fragrant. Wei Chang Hong was walking behind them. He wasn't good at conversations, so he didn't say much and only quietly followed them.

Wei Luo looked at them. Just as she was about to say good-bye to Zhao Jie, she heard him say, "Ah Luo, if you're not feeling well, I'll bring you back to Qian Temple."

Wei Luo subconsciously wanted to refuse. How could she leave behind Chang Hong and Liang Yu Rong? They said they would look at the peach blossoms together. How could she go back by herself?

But, in the next moment, Zhu Geng appeared out of nowhere with a jujube red horse. Zhao Jie took the reins from him, then he turned his head towards her and said, "This is the prince's personal

horse. You can use him to go up the mountain."

"..."

To be honest, Wei Luo really wanted to accept.

If she weren't riding a horse, then she would have to walk back up to Qian Temple. It was such a long mountain path. With her current strength, she definitely wouldn't be able to walk back.

While she was sitting there and struggling with this dilemma, before she had time to decide, Zhao Jie came forward and lifted her up onto the horse by holding her by her waist. He held back his smile and said, "This prince will have Zhu Geng tell them. They'll understand."

Wei Luo grabbed the horse's mane, held herself up, pursed her lips, and finally nodded.

Zhao Jie didn't let Jin Lu follow them. He walked in front of the horse and personally held the reins and left the pavilion area with her.

Sitting on this horse, she was able to see the peach tree grove's entire scenery at this height. The fluttering peach flower petals fell on Wei Luo's body. She looked forward to watch Zhao Jie's back. She tilted her head and unwittingly sunk into soul-searching thoughts. His shoulders were broad and his back was straight. He clearly had a noble status and a highborn temperament, but against expectations, he was willing to lead a horse for her.

They walked deeper and deeper. She already couldn't see the pavilion behind them. The peach flowers above her were in full bloom. The fragrance of the flowers assailed her nose with each breath.

She felt that something seemed off and she called out, "Big brother."

Zhao Jie turned around. His voice was magnetically attractive as he said, "Hmm?"



She asked, "Aren't we going back? This path doesn't seem right?"

Zhao Jie smiled and explained, "This is a shortcut. After we leave the peach tree grove, we'll see a hot spring. That's where we'll start walking up the mountain.

She made a noise of comprehension. She was pleasantly surprised from hearing the two words "hot spring". She had soaked in hot baths before, but she had never seen a natural hot spring. She didn't know what it would look like and was immediately full of curiosity.

## Chapter 66.3

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They soon left the peach tree grove and saw a naturally formed hot spring. Steep and rugged sides of the mountain surrounded the hot spring on all but one side. There was only one way to enter and exit. There were many stones piled together at the side of the pocket-sized hot spring. The warm steam that rose from the surface of the water directly hit their faces and was very tempting.

Wei Luo came down from the horse, walked to the hot spring, and enviously looked at it. If Zhao Jie wasn't here, she would want to take a soak in the hot spring. But, then she remembered that her situation was special today. Even if Zhao Jie wasn't here, she still couldn't go into the hot spring. As a result, her thoughts about it ended and she felt better. Seeing the smooth and beautiful stones near the hot spring, she couldn't resist picking up one of the stones. When she held the stone in the palm of her hand, the warmth that came from the surface of the stone pleasantly surprised her. "It's actually warm."

At her side, Zhao Jie smiled when he saw her pleasantly surprised expression, "Are you still in a hurry to go back?"

She shook her head honestly. This hot spring was more attractive than she had thought. She wanted to stay here longer. Her eyes turned and she quickly thought of a method. Her pink lips smiled as she earnestly asked him, "Big brother, I want to soak my feet. You can't look. Could you wait over there?" As she said this, she pointed at a nearby thicket.

The warm water would drive away the soreness in her legs and feet. In addition, a natural hot spring would be able to treat slight ailments. If she could soak her feet in this water, it would be really good.

Zhao Jie looked at her for a moment, then he nodded and said, "Okay."

She didn't feel assured, so she warned again, "If anyone comes, you have to stop him first, then tell me."

She looked very commanding when she was issuing her orders. He laughed and took her at her words, "Got it!"

He walked to the place that she had pointed, stood underneath the trees, calmly leaned against a tree, and smiled as he looked at the nearby girl. Wei Luo's back was facing him. A pair of pink shoes embroidered with a peony pattern was left on the shore after she took off her shoes and socks. Her feet were soaking in the hot spring and her small body was curled up. There was definitely a satisfied look on her face at the moment.

Wei Luo picked up the warm stone, wrapped it up in cloth, placed it on her stomach, and immediately felt the warmth spreading throughout her body. Her fatigue and pain were greatly alleviated.

She sighed in contentment and suddenly felt somewhat unwilling to leave here.

Zhao Jie waited underneath the tree for 15 minutes. The girl in the hot spring hadn't moved. At first, he thought she had forgotten about the time, so he waited another 15 minutes. However, she still didn't move away from the hot spring. Zhao Jie didn't notice there was something wrong until her little head drooped and her body senselessly tilted to the side.

He reached her in a few steps and stopped her petite shoulders from falling down. The girl's eyes were closed and her cherry lips were slightly open. She had actually fallen asleep!

He laughed involuntarily and helplessly scratched his nose. She could even fall asleep here. She really was too careless!

It wouldn't be okay for her to continue soaking here. He carried her out of the hot spring and placed her on a nearby flat stone. When her white jade feet were pulled out of the water, the water droplets slid down from her feet and dripped down into the grass.

Instead of placing her feet on the ground, he placed them on his legs. He took out his handkerchief and carefully wiped away the water on her feet. Everything about her was lovable. Even her feet were better looking than other people's. Her feet were tender and pale. Her ten toes were cute and as smooth as crystals. Her toenails were slightly pink and tempted a person to linger and fondle admiringly.

Zhao Jie's eyes darkened. His thumb stopped on her toes and gently hovered there. A long time later, he let go of her feet and put on her socks and shoes.

She must have been really tired. She didn't even wake up from these actions. He placed her on the horse, then mounted the horse and sat behind her. His long arms stretched out and took her into his arms. They rode the horse up the mountain. Who knew what Wei Luo was dreaming as she fidgeted in his embrace with her cheeks close to his chest. She finally found a comfortable spot as she wrapped her arms around his thin and strong waist and continued to sleep.

Zhao Jie's dark eyes deepened. One hand was around her waist. The other hand was tightly holding the reins. His palms felt hot and emitted a burning heat.

As they approached closer to Qian Temple, the speed of the horse became slower and slower.

When there was still a distance from the back gate, Zhao Jie tightened the reins to stop the horse. He hugged the girl in his arms closer, leaned over, carefully looked at her for a moment, and whispered into her ear, "Ah Luo?"

Wei Luo didn't respond. Her little face was peaceful. She was still serenely sleeping.

Zhao Jie gazed at her pure white face. She was in his arms and heart. This small girl occupied his entire heart. From the time that he knew she had her first period, the feelings that he had been

oppressing for a long time started to bubble up and it was almost at the point that he couldn't control them.

She finally grew up. He impatiently thought about turning her into his.

After looking at her for a long time, he finally lowered his head and gently dropped a kiss on her forehead.

The girl was still sleeping without showing any reaction.

He straightened his body up and felt that this kiss wasn't close to being sufficient. He wanted her too much and had endured for too long. He already reached his limits. He looked at her tender, pink lips and moved closer and closer. The tip of his nose was touching the tip of her nose. Slowly, with restraint, he kissed her lips.

His dark eyes looked at her. It was unfortunate that her eyes were closed and she couldn't see the emotions in his eyes, much less his hidden tempestuous emotions.

He extended his tongue to lick her lips. Not only was her body soft, she was also unbelievably soft here. He didn't stay for long. He was worried that if he stayed longer he wouldn't be able to control himself. He straightened up, tightly held her waist, and deeply breathed into her neck.

After he finally calmed down the desire in his heart, he jumped down from the horse, and carried her back to her room.

At this time, Wei Chang Hong and the others hadn't returned yet. Zhao Jie arrived at the courtyard for female guests, asked which room Wei Luo was staying, and walked to her room. He pushed open the door, walked into her inner room, gently put her down on the bed, and covered her with a blanket. He stood near her bed for a while. He rubbed the red birthmark between her eyebrows before turning around and leaving.

Shortly after Zhao Jie left, there was movement in the bed.

Wei Luo's thick and long eyelashes fluttered and she slowly opened her eyes.

## Chapter 67.1

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Wei Luo slept for a long time without waking up. She continued sleeping even when the sky had darkened.

Because Liang Yu Rong and the others were worried about her, they didn't stay in the peach tree grove for a long time and had rushed back. Zhao Jie had explained to Jin Lu before leaving with Wei Luo. Jin Lu had an understanding of propriety. In order to protect her Miss's pure reputation, she couldn't say the wrong words. So, Liang Yu Rong and the others only knew that Wei Luo was feeling unbearably painful and since Zhao Jie coincidentally passed by the peach tree grove and was going back to Qian Temple, he conveniently brought Wei Luo with him on his way back.

In fact, most of this was true. Other than what Zhao Jie had done at the corner gate, everything that was witnessed by other people was done according to proper standards.

After Liang Yu Rong returned from the peach tree grove, she wanted to visit Wei Luo. Unfortunately, Bai Lan said that Wei Luo was still sleeping, so she could only return to her own room. Wei Chang Hong also came a few times. During that period of time, Wei Luo's door was closed every time, so he didn't go inside to bother her and only repeatedly told Bai Lan to take good care of Wei Luo.

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Early next morning, Wei Chang Hong came over again when Wei Luo was getting out of bed.

At this time, Wei Luo's pain had already eased a lot. Her complexion had also regained its glossy rosiness and she wasn't as pale as yesterday. She took the moist towel that Jin Lu handed her to wipe her face. After she finished washing her face, she sat down at a round, Chinese cedar table, greeted Chang Hong, and invited him to eat breakfast with her.

The temple only offered vegetarian dishes. A single glance showed that there were only tofu buns, turnip cakes, vegetarian congee, and a few picked vegetables as side dishes on the table. Wei Luo picked up a tofu bun with her chopsticks and put it into her mouth. The fresh and soft tofu bun was filled with shitake mushrooms, various other mushrooms, and pine nuts. When it entered her mouth, there was a strong aroma and it left a rich aftertaste.

Although it was only temple food, it had been prepared more finely than common simple foods.

Wei Luo wasn't picky about this food. The food that she ate in her previous life was significantly worse than this, so she could accept and adapt to eating simple meals or culinary delicacies. In addition, she had been too tired climbing up the mountain yesterday to eat dinner. As soon as she woke up this morning, her stomach felt extremely empty. So, how could she be picky right now? She would eat even a bowl of vegetarian congee with great relish.

Although she was comfortable eating this food, it didn't mean that everyone else would feel the same way.

At the same time, in another room, Wei Zheng was very dissatisfied.

Wei Zheng was staying at the end point of the eastern verandah. There were three to four rooms between her and Wei Luo. Currently, she was very angry with the servants and had driven two servant girls out of her room.

After the two servant girls left the room, they passed by Wei Luo's room.

Wei Luo coincidentally heard this part of their conversation.

One of the servant girls wearing a purple top and a white skirt complained, "Fifth Miss is really making it difficult for us. How



could there be eggs at temple? But, she's insisting on eating eggs stir-fry with yuqian..."

The other servant girl was wearing a silver hairpin and also felt very vexed, but she shook her head and said, "Never mind. It can't be helped. We're servants. We have to figure out a way to get that dish for Fifth Miss."

The two gradually walked farther away and disappeared. Their voices also faded away.

Wei Luo dipped the turnip cake in sauce, placed it in her mouth, and noisily ate it.

Wei Zheng was unreasonable. What was so bad with eating one meal of temple food? Temples were naturally a place to eat vegetarian foods and pray to Buddha. She came here, but wouldn't follow this place's rules. Wasn't she deliberate trying to find faults? If the abbot found out, he would definitely expel her from here.

As expected, the two servant girls came back with empty hands. With lowered heads, they humbly apologized to Wei Zheng. Wei Zheng only criticized them for being useless, then she stared at the verdant vegetarian congee, frowned in dislike, pushed the dish aside, and said, "I won't eat it. Bring me some pastries to snack on."

Pastries made in Duke Ying's residence had been brought along this trip. Originally, they were to be eaten on the road. Unexpectedly, they had a use at this moment.

After speaking, she saw the two servant girls standing there and not moving. She asked, "What happened?"

The servant girl lowered her head and said, "To respond to Miss, you ate the rest of the pastries last night..."

So, actually, as it turned out, Wei Zheng wasn't happy with eating the temple food last night either and had eaten the last few pieces of the buttery pastries with pine nut filling. Since it was already gone, how could they bring anything to her? Hearing this,

Wei Zheng became even moodier. She didn't want to eat the vegetarian congee, so with an empty stomach, she left her room after changing into a moon white silk top and a crepe skirt.

Passing by Wei Luo's door, she saw her holding a tofu bun and biting into it. She immediately snorted disdainfully and walked away.

Inside the room, Wei Chang Hong frowned unhappily, put down his chopsticks, stood up, and said, "I'll go talk to her."

Wei Zheng and Wei Luo had never gotten along. Wei Zheng had always looked down at Wei Luo. They had grown up during the past two years. Wei Zheng's cleverness and tolerance had increased. She had gradually become calm and collected in front of Wei Luo and wasn't as fickle and impatient. She hid her thoughts inside her heart. She knew that she couldn't compare with Wei Luo. Wei Kun and Wei Chang Hong would always side with Wei Luo. And Wei Luo also had Princess Tiangji and Prince Jing supporting her. So, she wouldn't openly provoke Wei Luo the way she did as a child and leave behind evidence that could be used against her. She would only look at her with cold eyes of a bystander and occasionally say a few words of ridicule at her when she was in a bad mood.

Wei Luo stopped him. She smiled and quietly said, "Why do you care about her actions? If she doesn't want to eat, that's her business. Not only must we eat, we must eat until we're full." As she said this, she added a radish cake to Wei Chang Hong's bowl. She thoughtfully advised, "Eat this to fill your stomach."

They would definitely descend the mountain today and would have to walk for a long time. How could it be okay to not eat until they were full? If Wei Zheng didn't eat anything, she would faint on the side of the road and there would be no one to carry her.

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Around 8am, first madam arrived at the main hall.

She stood in front of the bamboo cylinder that contained the drawing lots. There was a total of 228 bamboo sticks inside. The one that was marked 228 was the winning bamboo stick that would give a person the opportunity to meet the senior monk. She held the servant girl's hand, took a deep breath, and hesitated with her decision on which bamboo stick to select until the monk next to her urged her to pick. She closed her eyes and selected a bamboo stick. Without even looking at it, she handed it over to the monk at her side.

The monk took it from her and calmly told her, "It's marked 113."

First Madam's heart suddenly sunk to an all-time low from the disappointment.

It seemed that she wouldn't be able to meet the senior monk today.

Mawkishly, she turned around and walked towards outside. Seeing her like this, the servant girl at her side softly comforted her, "It's not that bad. Madam, at worst, we can stay here another night and come here to pick another bamboo stick tomorrow. If we don't succeed tomorrow, there's the day after tomorrow... Eventually, there will be a result. Eldest Young Master's legs have already been like this for so many years. There's no need to be impatient over a few days now."

While those words were true, First Madam couldn't control the grief that showed on her face. It was exactly because the cure for Wei Chang Yin's legs have been delayed for so long that she felt so impatient. She didn't want to give up even if there was the slightest amount of hope.

First Madam tried to show a more cheerful expression and barely managed a smile, "Ah Luo, why did you also come here this early? Is there something on your mind?"

## Chapter 67.2

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Wei Luo faintly smiled without answering. She walked towards the nearby monk, took out a bamboo stick for her sleeve, handed it over to him, and asked, "Look, is this winning bamboo stick?"

The monk took it and looked. Indeed, it was this temple's bamboo stick and it was marked with the number 228. The monk didn't know how she got this, but since this bamboo stick was in her hand, then they had to follow the temple's rules. He said, "Please follow me."

Wei Luo looked at First Madam, blinked, and brightly said, "Eldest aunt, you should go."

Although First Madam was pleasantly surprised, she still couldn't resist asking, "Ah Luo, where did you get this bamboo stick?"

Both of Wei Luo's hands were behind her back when she curved her lips and said, "Someone gave me this bamboo stick this morning. He probably gave it to me because he didn't have anything he wanted to ask himself." Then, she pushed First Madam forward and urged, "Eldest Aunt, don't waste anymore time. Go and ask your question."

First Madam felt very grateful towards her. Her eyes were red as she said repeatedly said, "Okay." Then, she followed the monk to behind the main hall.

Standing behind her, Wei Luo looked at First Madam's back. She couldn't help hoping that Abbot Qing Wang would have a solution to her problem and tell her of a place that would be able to fix Wei Chang Yin's legs. If that were to happen, no one would stop Liang Yu Rong from being together with Wei Chang Yin. She also wouldn't have to continue feeling sorry for them. Perhaps in this lifetime, they would have a happy ending.

As for the bamboo stick... Zhu Geng had delivered it to her this

morning.

Zhu Geng had appeared at her door when she had just woken up. He didn't say any unnecessary words. He only handed her the bamboo stick and said, "The prince ordered me to pass this to Fourth Miss. Be careful. Don't lose it."

She hadn't even mentioned this yesterday. How did Zhao Jie know that she wanted to meet Abbot Qing Wang? Wei Luo accepted the bamboo stick and brought it closer to her face to look at it. For him to obtain this, he probably had a close relationship with Abbot Qing Wang. Otherwise, how could he so self-assuredly walk through the back door?

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A short period of time later, First Madam walked out of Abbot Qing Wang's room.

She had said everything about Wei Chang Yin's situation, then she asked the abbot two questions. The first question was whether a method to heal Wei Chang Yin's legs existed. The second question was if there was a method, whom should she ask to do the treatment. The abbot only answered her first question. There was definitely a way to treat his legs. However, the person who could successfully treat Wei Chang Yin's legs didn't have a fixed residence. He was constantly traveling the world. It wouldn't be easy to find his location.

First Madam asked the abbot about that person's circumstances. He sincerely said, "He's called Fu Xing Yun. He's a miraculous and brilliant doctor. No one has seen him in the past years. He hasn't appeared in front of anyone for a long time."

In other words, this hidden person might already be dead and it was only unknown. And even if she found him, he might not be willing to treat Wei Chang Yin's legs.

After obtaining this information, First Madam's mood was

complicated. Her hope was ignited, but she also felt depressed because Fu Xing Yun's location was unknown.

Her steps were heavy as she walked back to her room. She ordered the servant girls to pack up their things and inform everyone that they would soon be leaving the mountain.

After each person received the information, they knew that she had obtained an answer for her question. They weren't in a hurry to ask her the result. First, they packed up their things and followed First Madam in descending the mountain. Although it wasn't as tiring to walk down the mountain as it was to walk up, it still wasn't an easy walk. Because the mountain path was steep, they had to be very careful when walking. Otherwise, a moment of inattentiveness would result in falling down.

Not much time passed before everyone's legs started to feel tired and weak.

As First Madam was considering whether or not to find a place for everyone to rest for a bit, she heard a cry of alarm. She quickly stopped walking and turned around to look.

She saw Wei Zheng lying on the stone steps with an embarrassed and pale face. Wei Zheng had fallen three or four levels. Her arm and back had hit the stone steps and ached terribly. Seeing that everyone was looking at her, she looked very embarrassed.

Wei Zheng's servant girl was panic-stricken as she helped her up, "Miss, are you okay? Are you hurt from falling?"

Wei Zheng shook her head, then she stood up and said, "I'm okay..."

She hadn't eaten breakfast today and had felt dizzy with blurry vision from the unbearable hunger and walking on the mountain path without stopping. Her strength had been depleted a long time ago. A moment of carelessness and misplacing her step had led to her scene in front of her. Before she had time to call for help, she

had already heavily fallen on the ground. The feeling of piercing pain came from her arm. There was probably already a bruise there. Unfortunately, she couldn't check her injury. She could only hold onto Yin Lou and continue walking down.

First Madam and the other madams all said a few words to show care. Hearing that she said she was okay, they didn't ask any further.

Wei Zheng endured her hunger and dizziness. She carefully continued walking down the mountain. Coincidentally, two people passed by her.

Wei Chang Hong was walking easily while carrying Wei Luo. His gaze was fully concentrated looking forward and he didn't even look at her when he passed by her. On the other hand, Wei Luo turned her head towards her and curved her lips as she looked at her with pity.

Why did she pity her? What was there to be pitied about her?

Wei Zheng bit her lower lip as she watched them walk farther away. She couldn't help tightening the grip on her silk handkerchief.

Descending the mountain took less time than ascending the mountain. In only one hour, they were at the foot of the mountain. Duke Ying's black, flat-roof carriages were waiting for them on the side of the road. They had probably been waiting for a long time. Wei Zheng was the last person to walk down from the mountain. Her face was too pale and her footsteps were uneven. There was sweat on her forehead and she looked very embarrassed. Her servant girl was supporting almost half of her body.

For those that didn't know the truth, they would have thought she suffered through a catastrophe.

First Madam asked how she was again. After seeing Wei Zheng shaking her head and saying she was okay, she looked away.

Wei Zheng cared too much about losing face. She definitely wouldn't say she was like this because she had skipped breakfast. She would rather people misunderstand that she wasn't feeling well, then explain anything.

Seeing that everyone was here, First Madam told everyone to go into his or her respective carriages and prepare to go back to Duke Ying's residence.

Just as she said these words, an imperial carriage with a green canopy slowly came from behind and firmly stop at their side. After the carriage stopped, a slender white hand lifted up the embroidered curtain and a person came out of the carriage. Zhao Jie was wearing a forest green robe with a persimmon stem pattern. His dark eyes swept over everyone. Without being obvious, his gaze lingered on Wei Luo for a moment before stopping on First Madam.

It was only now that First Madam knew that he had also been Qian Temple during their visit. She hurriedly walked forward to salute, "This subject greets His Highness Prince Jing. I didn't know that His Highness was also here and had acted insufficiently respectful. Please forgive me Your Highness."

Zhao Jie curved his lips. He looked very amicable as he said, "No harm. This prince was traveling incognito this trip and didn't tell outsiders. Madam, no need to panic."

First Madam nodded her head, then politely said a few more words before saying good-bye. She saluted and said, "This subject respectfully sends off His Highness."

Zhao Jie turned around to go into his carriage. Before he left, he looked in Wei Luo's direction. She had originally been looking at him, but after noticing his gaze, for some unknown reason, her little face froze. Shortly after, she turned her head to avoid his gaze.



# Chapter 68.1

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After they returned from Qian Temple, a major event happened at Duke Ying's residence.

The argument between Second Master Wei Cheng and Second Madam Song-shi was so awful that it even alarmed Wei Zhang Chun and Old Madam. After three years, Second Master had returned from Jiang Nan. But, he didn't return by himself. He had brought back a daughter that was born by the Second Master's outside mistress.

This daughter was fourteen years old and had reached a marriageable age. Second Master had brought her back to Duke Ying's residence in order to give her a status, so that it would be easy to find a good husband for her.

Once this matter was known, everyone in the residence was surprised, even Old Madam.

Fourteen years old! He had actually hidden this for so long. Song-shi felt as if her heart had died and turned into ashes. Instead of trying to resolve the problem, she took the stance of worsening the problem by having a huge falling out with him. No matter what, she wouldn't allow someone else's daughter to take even one step inside Duke Ying's residence.

Song-shi had been married to Second Master for sixteen years. They currently had two daughters and no sons. Her older daughter Wei Sheng was fifteen years old and was already betrothed. Her second daughter Wei Dong was fourteen and was waiting to be married. Originally, she had thought they were a couple that had conjugal love. They had treated each other with mutual respect for so many years.

She hadn't expected that he would hurt her so badly. This daughter was fourteen years old, which meant that he had started this affair at least fifteen years ago when she was newly married

into Duke Ying's residence. While dealing insincere affection towards her, he was having illicit sex with another woman. When Song-shi pictured this scene, her disgust and hate towards him was unbearable!

If he had honestly told her that he wanted to have a concubine, she might have agreed. But, he had deliberately chosen this method and the feelings she had developed towards him over these many years had disappeared like smoke into thin air.

After this matter, Song-shi hated Wei Cheng and his daughter to the point that her teeth felt itchy with the urge to bite them. She almost drove Wei Cheng out the door.

When Wei Luo and Fourth Madam Qin-shi arrived at second branch's courtyard, they heard the sound of Song-shi shattering porcelain in the main room. One after another, cloisonné cups with flower designs, sculptures for the three gods of blessings, fame, and longevity, enamel vases decorated with evergreen pine, bamboo, and plum flowers were flung at Second Master. Standing at the door, Wei Luo felt sorry for the shattered first class antiques.

After Song-shi had thrown all of the porcelain on the shelves, with red eyes, she said to Second Master, "If you want that wretched woman's daughter to enter here, gather all the porcelain fragments on the ground and restore them to their original forms. Whenever you finish doing this, I'll allow her into this home." This prerequisite was ingenious. She had shattered over ten porcelains with different patterns and shapes. In addition, some of the fragments were only the size of a pinky finger. It was too difficult to restore them. It was basically an impossible task.

There was an injury on Second Master's forehead from her smashing and it was currently bleeding. He didn't show any indignation on his face. He probably wasn't inclined to lower himself to her level. He flung his sleeve and before he left, he said, "It doesn't matter if you agree or not. It's fine if only my mother agrees."

Second master's biological mother, Lan-shi, was Old Madam's personal servant. She had once saved Old Madam's life. Because of her affection towards Lan-shi, she treated Second Master like her own son and had never been ungenerous with him. So, if he were to ask his biological mother, Lan-shi, to speak with Old Madam about this matter, Old Madam would definitely agree to Lan-shi's request.

It was only adding another pair of chopsticks to the table. It wasn't a difficult thing.

Song-shi probably also knew this. After Wei Cheng left, she sat down on the Eight Immortal chair with disappointment and frustration. She took out her silk handkerchief and bitterly cried.

Song-shi had a splendid family background. Her father, Song Ying Qi, was Wu Ying Hall's Minister of Revenue. Although she was born from a concubine, she was her father's favorite. Her status at home wasn't any worse than a daughter born from the legal wife. In terms of social status, Song-shi and second master Wei Cheng were well matched and very close to each other's. They couldn't be better suited for each other. This marriage was predestined by fate and everyone had been optimistic about it. But now, this type of problem had arisen.

Song-shi cried endlessly. No matter what Qin-shi said, she couldn't improve her mood. As she cried, she talked about Second Master's wrong doings, "Will I even have to prepare another woman's daughter's dowry..."

On the side, Qin-shi persuaded her, "Things have already reached this point. What's the use of crying? Second sister-in-law should be thinking about a way to deal with this matter... Doesn't second brother-in-law want her to get married? You're the person in charge of second branch's household. When the time comes, you'll have the final say in who she marries."

Although this was true, Song-shi still felt nauseous. At the

moment, she couldn't accept the truth and wasn't able to listen to any of Qin-shi's words.

In her previous life, Wei Luo didn't grow up in Duke Ying's residence, so she had missed many things including this matter. She was at a loss to what the ending of this matter would be. At the side, she didn't have any words to add, so after silently sitting there for while, she stood up and left.

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Half a month later, Second Master brought the daughter that was born outside back to Duke Ying's residence. Wei Luo heard that there was another period of turning the sky and earth upside down level of disturbances at Bamboo Courtyard

The madams in the residence didn't approve of this daughter entering the residence. However, it wasn't good to interfere with their brother-in-law's family matters. They could only hide their thoughts in their heart and quietly observe this change. During this period of time, Qin-shi had gone to Bamboo Courtyard too many times to persuade Song-shi and Wei Cheng. Her lips and tongue had long turned dry. She became seriously sick because of this matter and no longer had the energy to be concerned about the two of them.

However, Qin-shi still couldn't let go of her worries, so she entrusted the task of going over there to look to Wei Luo. If Song-shi was being too impulsive, she could lend a hand by stopping her.

When Wei Luo arrived at Bamboo Courtyard, the silent main hall seemed out of place. She looked inside and only saw a girl kneeling. The girl was wearing a yellow satin weave robe with wide sleeves. She had a beautiful face and a delicate body with a waist that was like a willow. A single glance would be enough to know that she was a girl from Jiangnan. Hearing footsteps, the girl looked up to see Wei Luo. The girl's dark eyes were full of uneasiness as if she were an easily startled bird. Although she was

beautiful, she didn't seem very clever.

She was probably the daughter that second uncle's had raised outside the residence.

Wei Luo's gaze stopped on her face for moment, then without a change in her expression, she left and walked towards the back of the main hall.

## Chapter 68.2

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On the way to the back of the main hall, Wei Luo asked a servant girl where Second Madam was. The servant girl said she was in the main room, so Wei Luo started walking in that direction.

On the way to the main room, the verandah was empty. As she passed by a window on the way to the door, she suddenly heard people talking. Normally, she felt it was beneath her dignity to eavesdrop, but she heard a familiar voice and froze. Before she had time to think it through, the people had already stopped at the window.

There were two voices. One was second aunt Song-shi. The other was third aunt Liu-shi.

Liu-shi was speaking. Her words were intermittent and Wei Luo couldn't clearly hear everything, "... Men are all scoundrels who can't control themselves. They'll fancy any woman that knows how to curry favor with them. Things have already reached this point. Come to an acceptance with this unpleasant fact. Don't continue being angry..."

Song-shi was sobbing and sniffing as she said, "Do you think I don't want to get over this? It's only that I'm too disappointed with him. To think that the feelings from this many years of marriage didn't matter..."

Liu-shi interrupted her in a sympathetic tone, "What does the feelings between a married couple count for? I've been married to Third Master for so many years. How does he treat me?" She sighed and indignantly continued, "His heart only has Jiang Miao Lan. I haven't even entered his eyes. He treats me with cold indifference. Some women have the type of skill to charm men into losing their senses and willingly to do anything for them. We don't have this skill. We can only know our place and support our husbands and educate our children. One day they will discover our

goodness."

Song-shi didn't say anything. She was stilling sobbing.

Probably because she had brought up the topic of her own heartache, Liu-shi couldn't hold herself back for continuing to say, "Back then, if Du-shi and I didn't act together... Jiang Miao Lan would probably still be here. As long as she was here, there wouldn't be peace in the residence."

Underneath the window, Wei's Luo's expression sank as she listened.

Liu-shi was comparing Jiang Miao Lan to Dong-shi? Dong-shi was an outside mistress that couldn't be brought out into public. Jiang Miao Lan had been Wei Kun's officially wedded wife! Could these two people be compared?

And what had she just said? She said that she and Du-shi had worked together to force Jiang Miao Lan to leave. So Jiang Miao Lan didn't die?

She quietly turned around and walked back to Pine Courtyard. On the way, she kept thinking about Liu-shi's words.

Jiang Miao Lan didn't die. She had only been forced to leave by Liu-shi and Du-shi. If she hadn't died, why didn't she come back to see her and Chang Hong? In her previous life, Du-shi had sold her off and Li Song and Li Xiang had ruined Chang Hong, but Jiang Miao Lan had never appeared. Where did she go? She might as well have died. Wei Luo admitted that she blamed and hated her. Even though she knew Jiang Miao Lan had suffered through hardships, she still couldn't forgive her.

However, while she hated her, she was also curious about what happened that year. What had Liu-shi and Du-shi done to cause her to callously leave behind Chang Hong and her? If she didn't find this out, there would be a festering knot in her heart.

Wei Luo had originally intended to go to the study to look for

that painting. Perhaps, she would be able to find some clues by looking at that painting. However, just as she was about to walk there, a servant girl came from the front courtyard to say, "Miss, Marquis Ping Yuan's daughter is here to see you. She's currently waiting for you at the receiving room."

Liang Yu Rong?

Why was she here? What happened?

With doubts in her heart, Wei Luo walked towards the receiving room.

Arriving at the receiving room, she saw Liang Yu Rong sitting on an ironwood chair and drinking tea as she waited for Wei Luo. Seeing that she had arrived, Liang Yu Rong hurriedly came forward to grab her arm and smilingly say, "Ah Luo, I'm going shopping at Ba Zhen to buy candy and pastries today. Come with me, okay?"

Wei Luo was in messy and chaotic state of mind and was originally going to refuse.

However, when she slanted her head and saw Liang Yu Rong's eyes that were full of hope, the words of refusal hovered inside her mouth instead. In the end, she nodded and said, "Okay."

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Ba Zhen was located in the middle of West Main Street. People were closely line up inside the store like the teeth of a comb. It was very boisterous.

Ba Zhen's candy and pastries were very well known. They had an endless stream of visitors every day. Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong came down from the carriage and walked through Ba Zhen's front doors. In front of the pastries, they saw the back of a young man wearing a sapphire blue robe embroidered with the four blessings pattern. This store usually only had women coming here to buy their products. Men didn't like to eat this type of sweet foods, so



when a man came inside the store, it attracted the gaze of many women.

Furthermore, his appearance was radiantly handsome and hearty. It completely moved the hearts of the women. From time to time, they would sneak a peak at him and blush.

The young man inclined his head, pointed at the round flat pastries with dried peach and roses and the fried twisted dough with honey and pine nuts, and said, "I want these two types."

Wei Luo finally had a clear look of his face. It was Fifth Prince Zhao Zhang!

The storekeeper quickly and solicitously wrapped up those items from him. Zhao Zhang also ordered a few types of candied fruit and small, flat and round pastries dusted with sugar. He turned to leave after the guard at his side stepped forward and paid.

When Zhao Zhang turned his head, he saw that Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong had been standing behind him.

He only recognized Wei Luo. On Spring Lantern Festival, he had apologized on behalf of Li Song and had invited her and Song Hui to Emerald Restaurant. Seeing her now, he froze for a moment, then he smiled and asked, "Does House Wei's Fourth Miss also like to eat the pastries from here?"

Wei Luo shook her head, pulled Liang Yu Rong forward, and said, "I'm accompanied Yu Rong here." She paused, looked at the oilpaper packet in his hand, curved her lips, and asked, "Fifth... Sir, do you like to eat sweet things?"

Zhao Zhang knew that she had misunderstood. He faintly smiled and explained, "I went outside for work today and passed by here on the way back. This isn't for me to eat. I bought this to give to Lin Lang."

Oh right. He was Lin Lang's older brother. Wei Luo had almost forgotten this.

She smiled and nodded. She didn't ask any other questions. She pulled Liang Yu Rong with her to the side. Her meaning was clear without any words.

Zhao Zhang passed by them, then he seemed to have suddenly thought of something. He turned his head and asked, "I heard that Duke Ying's family went to Qian Temple recently. My second brother also went there on the same day. Did House Wei's Fourth Miss meet him there?"

At the mention of Zhao Jie, there was a slight delay in Wei Luo's response.

## Chapter 68.3

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Wei Luo quickly returned to her senses and remembered that Zhao Jie said he was traveling incognito. He probably didn't want other people to know about his whereabouts. She appeared sincere when she smoothly replied, "We went there to seek a meeting with Abbot Qing Wang and didn't pay attention to the other guests. I'm afraid I won't be able to answer Fifth Sir's question."

Seeing her suddenly indifferent attitude, Zhao Zhang froze for a moment, then he lightly laughed and apologized, "I was lacking in manners." As he said this, he bowed to Wei Luo, then turned around, left Ba Zhen, and went into his green canopy carriage to return to the palace.

Watching Zhao Zhang leave, Liang Yu Rong couldn't resist the curiosity in her heart and quietly asked, "That person was..."

Zhao Zhang was still living in the palace and hadn't established his own residence, so it was normal that Liang Yu Rong hadn't met him before. In addition, they were different genders. Even if they went to the same banquet, they would be sitting in different area. It wasn't only Zhao Zhang. Liang Yu Rong hadn't seen Zhao Jie's face either.

Wei Luo took back her attention and set her gaze on the numerous pastries in the store. Without a change in her expression, she said, "He's Zhao Jie's fifth brother."

Hearing these words, Liang Yu Rong immediately understood. Zhao Jie was the second prince. His fifth brother was the fifth prince! At the sudden realization, she patted her shoulder from lingering trepidation. "Fortunately, I didn't say any wrong words just now."

Wei Luo curved her lips, softly laughed, and couldn't resist making fun of her, "What were you thinking of saying to him?"

Liang Yu Rong drew back her head and said, "Eating so many sweets, take care that you don't get a toothache..."

Actually, this was a great truth.

The two of them didn't continue talking about Zhao Zhang. They started to earnestly select which pastries to buy.

Liang Yu Rong had originally intended to only buy a candy called snowflake fruit for Wei Chang Yin. But after looking at all of the cute and exquisitely made pastries and candies, she wanted all of them. After hesitating, she bought snowflake fruit candy and two types of pastries for Wei Chang Yin, a few types of pastries for Wei Luo, and several types of pastries and candies for herself before leaving Ba Zhen perfectly satisfied.

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After leaving Ba Zhen, Zhao Zhang's carriage slowly moved forward.

Zhao Zhang lifted the curtain and asked a black-robed guard that was at the carriage's side, "Have you found out what second brother asked Abbot Qian Wang that day?"

The guard was keeping pace with the carriage on horseback. In an ashamed tone, he said, "This subordinate is incompetent and hasn't found out any inside information."

Zhao Zhao's face slightly showed his unhappiness. Abbot Qing Wang was an enlightened senior monk. For Zhao Jie to ask for a meeting with him, he must have asked him questions about the imperial court. If Abbot Qing Wang told him the right paths to take for those issues and Zhao Jie achieved a speedy enlightenment, it would certainly put himself in an unfavorable situation.

Currently, the imperial court was divided into three groups. One group of officials supported him, another group supported Zhao Jie, and the third group consisted of officials that remained neutral

and didn't enter muddied waters. He had already been firmly suppressed by Zhao Jie's influence and power. Now that Zhao Jie had obtained Abbot Qing Wang's assistance, his position had become even more precarious.

After thinking about this for a while, he decided that his most urgent priorities would be to support his loyal confidants and to draw over to his side some of the officials that were on Zhao Jie's side.

He thought of Count Zhong Yi's eldest grandson, Song Hui. Song Hui was a young scholar that had an encyclopedic knowledge of state policies and studying wasn't his only talent. He had a flexible mind and mastered his knowledge of state policies through a comprehensive study of surrounding areas. He was a very promising individual and definitely a talented person that would be assigned to an important position in the future. Before too long, the April court examination would be taking place. If Song Hui could score in the top three and obtain Emperor Chong Zhen's appreciation, then the number of his capable helpers would undoubtedly increase based on his current relationship with Count Zhong Yi.

Count Zhong Yi's family had a close relationship with Duke Ying's family. It would be excellent if he could capture Duke Ying's family in one move and incorporate them into his group of subordinates.

After thinking, he asked, "I heard that House Wei's Fourth Miss was betrothed to Song Hui when her mother was pregnant with her?"

The guard nodded and said, "Yes."

Hearing this, his lips curved up and he fell into deep thought.

-----

The next day, Emperor Chong Zhen had him and Zhao Jie go to

the imperial study for a discussion. It would soon be the court examination, so he wanted to know their views about it and if they had any talented people they wanted to recommend.

In order to test their abilities, Emperor Chong Zhen often called them into his study to ask them about minutiae topics.

Currently, Emperor Chong Zhen was sitting at a black table outlined in gold and decorated with twin dragons made of precious stones. He was holding a list of this year's candidate for the court examination and inspecting the names of the candidates one by one as he waited for Zhao Jie and Zhao Zhang's replies.

With a careful and respectful attitude, Zhao Zhang cupped his hands and said, "To respond to imperial father, your imperial son believes that Count Zhong Yi's eldest grandson has outstanding talent and will reveal his talent in this year's court examination."

Having a slight impression of this person, Emperor Chong Zhen put down his list and thoughtfully asked, "Oh, are you speaking of Song Hui?"

Zhao Zhang nodded.

Emperor Chong Zhen nodded in improvement and mused to himself, "This emperor has seen him a few times. He's politically astute, doesn't stubbornly adhere to old ideas, and has an intelligent mind. Indeed, he is pretty good."

Receiving the emperor's praise, Zhao Zhang curved up his lips into a smile.

On the side, Zhao Jie lowered his eyes. Without the slightest ripple in his voice, he calmly said, "Although Song Hui has outstanding talent, his temperament is too weak and gentle. He's capable in writing essays, but he may not be suitable as an official." He looked up to directly look at Emperor Chong Zheng and said, "Your imperial son also has a person to recommend."

Emperor Chong Zhen asked, "Who?"

He answered, "The Minister of Rites Zuo Zong's heir, Zuo Cheng Huai."

Emperor Chong Zhen was slightly surprised. He also had an impression of this person. Zuo Cheng Huai had participated in last year's civil service exam and had successfully passed the first grades of the examination system, but not the court examination yet. It wasn't because his literary talent was bad. It was because his words had been too sharp and unconventional. Last year's scoring examination official was an old man that inflexibly acted in accordance to convention and disliked his conduct. Although every sentence of Zuo Cheng Huai's essay was incisive, it still received a low score.

Zhao Jie recommended him because he greatly admired him after meeting him a few times by chance. Although Zuo Cheng Huai wasn't suitable at writing essays, he would be very suitable as an official. If he were the one managing the details of disaster relief, it would definitely be done in a methodical manner.

Emperor Chong Zhen pondered this for a moment, then he said, "This emperor will personally review these two people's examination papers. After seeing which person has the superior paper, I will give you two a fair answer."

After saying this, he asked a few questions about taxation and this year's disaster in the northwest. The two of them stuck to their own viewpoints. Neither of them would yield even one step to the other.

About an hour later, Emperor Chong Zhen was exhausted from listening to them. He waved his hand to signal for them to leave.

Zhao Zhang suddenly stepped forward and said, "Your imperial son has something else to say."

Emperor Chong Zheng was holding a purple brush and marking the court examination list. Without looking up, he said, "Speak."

Zhao Zhang looked down and slowly said, "The person that this subject recently mentioned, Song Hui, had an engagement with Duke Ying's family's Fourth Miss, Wei Luo since they were children. If he receives the top score in this year's court examination, could imperial father bestow this marriage for him?"



# Chapter 69.1

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Zhao Jie stopped walking, slowly turned around, and maintained his composure as he looked at Zhao Zhang.

Zhao Zhang had his own ideas and his calculations were exceptionally meticulous. With the relationship between Count Zhong Yi and Noble Consort Ning, if Song Hui could score first place in the court examination, Song Hui would definitely stand on Zhao Zhang's side. By playing matchmaker for Wei Luo and Song Hui's wedding, Song Hui would harbor thoughts of gratefulness towards him and loyally serve him. In addition, after gaining a layer of relationship with Wei Luo, he wouldn't have to worry about gaining Duke Ying's family as his supporters. This was a brilliant scheme that would kill two birds with one stone.

Although he had calculated everything properly, he unfortunately didn't know about Zhao Jie's feelings towards Wei Luo.

While he was there frankly speaking with assurance, Zhao Jie didn't show his emotions as he listened.

Once Zhao Zhang was done speaking, Zhao Jie calmly asked, "Fifth brother is so concern about a marriage for Count Zhong Yi's family. Is it because you have other intentions?"

Hearing Zhao Jie being so blunt about point this out, Zhao Zhang was slightly stunned and his face was stifled for a moment before he raised the corners of his lips to smile and say, "Second brother is thinking too much. What kind of intentions can I have? I was only casually mentioning this in consideration for imperial father's reputation."

Zhao Jie raised his eyebrows and exasperatingly slowly said, "Oh." His entire self became imposing. Although he didn't show any signs of anger, he gave off a sense of indescribable oppression, "For imperial father's reputation? It doesn't seem that simple. Fifth

brother already has a good relationship with Count Zhong Yi and now you want to draw over Duke Ying's family to your side?" His thin lips were faintly smiling, but a trace of imperceptible coldness flashed through his phoenix eyes. "If this prince remembers correctly, "Duke Ying's family's fourth miss is only thirteen years old. Fifth brother, you're being too hasty."

Zhao Zhang's face changed. Zhao Jie had guessed all of his thoughts and mercilessly said them out loud. He was temporarily dumbstruck and speechless.

Emperor Chong Zhen's expression subtly changed and his grip on the purple brush tightened. He stared at both of them. His gaze was chaotic and penetrating.

A long time later, he asked Zhao Zhang, "Old five, is this true?"

The emperor's greatest taboo was the princes secretly pulling the officials to their sides and privately conspiring about imperial court matters. It gave him the feeling that his sons wanted to replace him before he died. Although Zhao Jie and Zhao Zhang were drawing official to their sides, they were extremely secretive with their actions and would never let him know. Now that Zhao Jie said these words, he would be more vigilant against Zhao Zhang.

Zhao Zhang's face was panic-stricken. He hurriedly lifted his robe, knelt down, and said, "To respond to imperial father, this isn't true."

Although he said this, he did have private contact with Count Zhong Yi, Song Bai Ye. Not only did they have contact, he had recorded each meeting in a book. He had also recorded the names of all court officials that he meetings with. Originally, he had only created this as evidence to be used against them just in case. He hadn't expected that it would become his own Achilles' heel.

He had secretly hidden that book. No one else knew its location other than him. Zhao Jie's tone had been so assured. Could he

know something?

Zhao Zhang was very unsettled.

Both of them had their own supporters. When Zhao Jie was secretly meeting with court officials, he never left behind evidence. The whereabouts of these meetings were indeterminate and elusive. Even if Zhao Zhang wanted to find information to use against Zhao Jie, there weren't any traces of it to be found.

In this aspect, Zhao Jie had outsmarted his opponent and Zhao Zhang was in disadvantageous position.

Emperor Chong Zhen's expression had slightly relaxed. After thinking it over, he said, "Since it's not true, then know your place and behave yourself. As for Song Hui's marriage, let's reconsider this after the court examination...."

After saying this, he waved his hand to indicate for the two of them to leave.

Zhao Jie and Zhao Zhang left the imperial study and walked in the direction of the palace gates.

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Near the palace gates, Zhao Jie held the reins, flipped onto his horse, and quietly ordered Zhu Geng, "Figure out a way to obtain old five's book, transcribe a copy, and deliver it to this prince. Remember to secretly proceed without letting anyone else find out."

Zhu Geng had followed him for a long time. Now that he was finally asking him to do something slightly difficult, he immediately readily agreed, "Prince, be assured. This subordinate will accomplish this task beautifully."

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At Duke Ying's residence, it was drizzling today. The raindrops landed on the verandah's glazed roof tiles and fell into the soil. The

rain wasn't heavy, but it felt as if it were unending. Wei Kun had gone to the imperial academy. After Wei Luo washed up and changed into a moon white and sky blue top with short sleeves, a gauzy honey yellow skirt, and gao die er shoes, she walked in the direction of the study.

The study was behind Pine Courtyard's main hall. It was the room that Wei Kun did his work. Normally, Wei Luo rarely came here. If it weren't for Jiang Miao Lan's painting, she probably wouldn't be stepping foot into here.

There wasn't anyone at the study's doors. She pushed open the doors and walked to behind the black table inlaid with golden spirals and engraved with clouds. Last time, she saw Wei Kun putting the painting away in the bookshelf here. She tried looking for it and in the innermost shelf, she found the painting sealed up for safe keeping inside a Chinese cedar box. She took the painting out of the box and slowly untied the red silk around the scroll. It was the woman she had seen last time.

She didn't discover anything on the painting, so she could only store the painting back in the box, put the box in the bookshelf, and leave the study.

When she returned to Pine Courtyard's main hall, there was servant girl wearing a bluish green top and skirt waiting for her. At the sight of her, the servant girl hurriedly came forward to say, "Fourth Miss, you finally returned."

Unclear about the reason why the servant girl was waiting for her, Wei Luo tilted her head and asked, "What happened?"

The servant girl nodded and hurriedly said, "Someone came to invite you to the palace."

Wei Luo froze for a moment and subconsciously asked, "Was it Princess Tianji that invited me?"

"It wasn't Princess Tianji." The servant girl shook her head and

continued, "It was Empress Chen that invited you to the palace."

Empress Chen?

This was even more puzzling. From the time she stopped being Zhao Liuli's study companion, she hadn't seen Empress Chen in a long time. Every time she went to the palace, she would directly go to Chen Hua Hall and rarely went to Zhao Yang Hall. Why did Empress Chen invite her to palace? Was there some urgent matter?

Although Wei Luo was startled, she didn't delay with going to her room. She had Jin Lu redo her hairstyle, add water crystal and jasper hairpins to her hair, take out a pair of turquoise and gold earrings from her trousseau, and put them on her ears before going into the palace carriage.

The carriage steadily headed towards the palace. An hour later, the carriage stopped at Qing Xi Palace's entrance. At the door, there was a mama wearing autumn colored clothes waiting for her.

Wei Luo came out of the carriage and followed behind the mama as they walked to Zhao Yang Hall.

After they passed through the long verandah in front of Zhao Yang Hall, they arrived at Zhao Yang Hall's doors. Wei Luo lowered her head as she entered the hall, saluted to Empress Chen while saying, "This subject greets Her Majesty."

Empress Chen was wearing an imperial golden top with wide sleeves and a golden skirt with blue sea serpent pattern. She was sitting on Chinese cedar chair with carved roses. After looking Wei Luo over, she smiled and said, "Rise, let this empress take a good look at you."

Wei Luo straightened and looked up.

She was suddenly startled when she looked up. Zhao Jie was sitting next to Empress Chen!

Zhao Jie was wearing a deep black robe with a persimmon pattern. He was supporting his chin in his hand and smiling as he

looked at her.

She froze for a moment, then hurriedly looked away from him and went to properly sit in the chair below Empress Chen's. Unfortunately, the orientation of this chair wasn't good. It was directly across from Zhao Jie's. As soon as she looked up, she would be meeting his eyes. Unexpectedly, he didn't exercise restraint. His dark eyes kept looking at her and made her feel slightly uncomfortable.

## Chapter 69.2

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Why was Zhao Jie here? Was it Empress Chen intention to invite her to palace or was it his? Was there some urgent matter?

While Wei Luo was puzzled, Empress Chen took the initiative in answering her doubts, "Liuli will soon turn fifteenth and have her hairpin ceremony. There needs to be a zanzhe This empress has thought about this for a while, but couldn't think of a suitable person. This empress remembered you after Chang Sheng mentioned you. You and Liuli are similar ages and are as close as sisters. There isn't another person more suitable than you." In the end, Empress Chen was smiling as she looked at her, "Would you be willing to attend?"

(T/N: Zanzhe is the person that assists the person in charge during the hairpin ceremony).

Wei Luo tilted her head and subconsciously asked, "Chang Sheng?"

(T/N: Chang Sheng literally means longevity)

Empress Chen covered the smile on her lips, "This is my son's childhood nickname. I'm too used to calling him by this nickname, so this empress temporarily forgot to modify my previous remark."

Oh... Wei Luo raised her her head to look at the person across from her and saw a slight change on Zhao Jie's face. She hadn't expected that such an imposing person would have such a cute childhood nickname. It was really unimaginable.

After thinking about it, Wei Luo nodded and said, "Since it Liuli's hairpin ceremony, I would definitely be willing to attend. But, I haven't been the zanzhe before and there are many things I'm not familiar with. I'm worried that I'll mess up the ceremony..."

Empress Chen gently comforted her, "There are still many things

to prepare for the hairpin ceremony. Once everything else is done, come to the place and there will be a person who specializes in this ceremony to teach you the steps. You don't have to worry."

Wei Luo felt reassured after hearing this. She nodded her head and met the Empress's gaze. She faintly smiled and said, "Okay, then I'll have to bother Your Majesty for this."

She was a well-behaved and lovable girl. Empress Chen had seen her when she was child. And now, she saw that Wei Luo had grown up extremely beautifully. When she had just entered into the hall, Empress Chen had been startled for a moment.

Empress Chen frequently saw Gao Dan Yang and Li Xiang. They each had their own style of beauty and Empress Chen originally thought they had very beautiful faces. But now, after meeting Wei Luo, she felt that they were slightly inferior. This young girl appeared perfect. Her eyebrows were as beautiful as peacock's feathers. Her skin was as white as snow. Her waist was as delicate as tied silk. Her teeth were as white as seashells. Her posture was as beautiful as fairy immortal's. In the end, she was extravagantly beautiful. In addition, her voice was milky soft and would make people's hearts soften when they heard it. It wouldn't be too much to say she was stunningly beautiful girl.

Empress Chen reminisced about past events as she held a snuff bottle with a brightly colored floral pattern outlined in gold. She couldn't help lament, "Time really doesn't spare anyone. Back then, you and Liuli were so small..." She gestured a short height with her hand. "And now you both have already grown up."

Wei Luo curved her lips into a smile and said, "But Your Majesty still looks the same as before without any changes."

This small mouth was so sweet. There wasn't any woman that didn't like to hear these types of words. Empress Chen's smile deepened and her gaze became more affectionate, "Child... This empress has always felt very grateful towards you. Back then, Liuli



refused to drink her medicine and only you had a way to make her drink it. Now, her body is much healthier and most of that credit goes to you. When I called you to the palace, I also had the intention to give my thanks."

Wei Luo naturally couldn't bear the empress's thanks. She quickly said, "The energy that Your Majesty expended was far greater than mine..."

A single sentence caused Empress Chen's eyes to become teary.

In the past years, Empress Chen had spent so much energy and thoughts on Liuli. Sometimes, she couldn't sleep at night because she was worried that when she woke up Liuli would become seriously sick again. During that period of time, she felt apprehensive every day. She didn't know how she passed that time and felt sorrow when she thought of those years. Fortunately, Liuli was now sensible with taking care of herself and she also had Yang Zhen at her side to protect her. So, she currently felt very reassured.

Empress Chen viewed Wei Luo in a new light. The more she looked, the more she liked her. She thought that Wei Luo was a considerate and sensible girl. Wei Luo's words reached the bottom of her heart. She had Mama Qiu bring over a small, carved sandalwood box to Wei Luo. "This Empress doesn't have anything else. My mother gave this head ornament to me when I entered the palace. Now, I'll transfer it you."

Inside the box, there was a head ornament made with golden wires. It had lotus flowers and was embedded with seven transparent rubies. A single glance showed that it was priceless. But, what was even more rare was Empress Chen's intention to show her kindly feelings. When Wei Luo heard about this head ornaments' origins, she felt as if she couldn't accept the gift. She opened her mouth to refuse, "This subject..."

Empress Chen deliberately stopped smiling and looked serious as

she threatened, "If you don't accept it, then you're refusing this empress's gratitude."

When did she have such thoughts? Wei Luo felt slightly wronged. She could only accept this gift and sincerely said, "Thank you, Your Majesty."

After they were done speaking about this, Empress Chen had her stay longer to talk for a bit. Her tone was polite and her manner was warm. It didn't seem like a conversation between an empress and her subject. Instead, it seemed like a conversation between an elder and her junior family member.

About two hours later, seeing that it wasn't early, Wei Luo stood up to say good-bye. Empress Chen didn't keep her any longer. After all, it was raining outside and it wouldn't be easy to walk outside when it became darker. Worried that Wei Luo would get wet from the rain, she had Mama Qiu bring an umbrella to take her to Qing Xi Palace's doors.

At the same time, Zhao Jie put down the lid on his teacup, dusted his robe, stood up, and said, "Imperial mother, your imperial son has something to attend to in his residence and will also be leaving."

Empress Chen didn't have any misgivings. She nodded and said, "I remember that you didn't bring an umbrella when you came here? Wait here until Mama Qiu brings back umbrellas."

He nodded in assent.

Mama Qiu soon came out of the warmed room with two umbrellas in her hand. One was for Wei Luo. The other was for Zhao Jie.

Zhao Jie took both of the umbrellas. Underneath the verandah, he said to Mama Qiu, "You can go back. This prince is going the same way as Fourth Miss and will show her out of Qing Xi Palace."

Mama Qiu didn't think anything of Zhao Jie's words. She nodded

and glanced at Wei Luo, then turned around and left.

But, why didn't she think about how Zhao Jie had never volunteered to send a girl off?

Wei Luo look at the departing figure of Mama Qiu and felt extremely helpless.

Zhao Jie lowered his eyes to look at the girl. In a few steps, he walked past her, "Let's go."

Wei Luo could only lift up her skirt as she walked faster to keep up. They were walking in the verandah. There was the sound of rain falling from the roof to the ground and splashing on the verandah. There were gusts of moist dampness.

Zhao Jie seemed displeased as he was walking. He was probably paying attention to her steps and wasn't walking fast or slow in front her. He didn't talk to her or turn around to look at her.

After finally arriving at the end of the verandah, the path in front of them led to the palace doors. Wei Luo walked faster to catch up and stopped three steps away from him. "Older brother Prince Jing, give me an umbrella."

As she said this, her small, white hand stretched out towards him without the slightest politeness.

Zhao Jie stopped. He turned to look at her, then he looked at the distance between them. He slightly curved his lips and joked, "You're standing so far away. How can this prince give you the umbrella?"

After thinking about it, she decided that her only option was to walk forward and she walked a few steps closer to him.

Who would have expected that he wouldn't give her the umbrella? He stared at her for a moment, then he slowly leaned over until he was intimately close to her as his dark eyes kept directly looking at hers. There was only a finger's width of a distance between them.

Wei Luo subconsciously retreated. He always seemed to frequently look at her without any reason.

His thin lips easily curved up and he asked, "Are you hiding from me?"

# Chapter 70

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Was she that obvious?

There was sense of uncertainty in Wei Luo's mind, but there wasn't the slightest change in her expression. She looked directly at his eyes, shook her head, and said, "I'm not."

Zhao Jie raised his eyebrow. It was apparent that he didn't believe her words.

When they were in Zhao Yang Hall, she was sitting right across from him, but she didn't look at him from beginning to end. She seemed opened, but she kept avoiding his gaze. Did she think of him as a decorative item? Or, had she done that intentionally?

She used to never hide from his gaze or politely call him "older brother Prince Jing", much less avoiding accidentally touching him. Now, she was deliberately keeping a distance between them. Could it be... she knew something? Had she been awake or woken up midway during that day in Qian Temple?

At the thought of that memory, Zhao Jie's eyes darkened. He looked at her without saying a word.

Wei Luo turned a blind eye towards his searching gaze. She hadn't taken back her stretched out small, soft, white hand. She repeated, "Older brother Prince Jing, give me an umbrella."

Zhao Jie didn't continue looking into her answer for his previous question. He handed her one of the two umbrellas and casually asked, "Did you answer imperial mother's questions honestly?"

Wei Luo took the bamboo umbrella, opened it above her head, and walked into the curtain of rain. She didn't have much of an impression of Empress Chen's questions from earlier. "Which question?"

This time, she didn't take that narrow path to leave Qing Xi Palace. Instead, she took the wide limestone-paved path. The

raindrops fell onto their umbrellas and there was a pitter-pattering sound. The palace was a quiet palace and there usually wasn't any sound to be heard when walking outside. The silence of the palace was enhanced by the contrasting sound of the falling rain. The pitter-pattering sound didn't feel noisy. Instead, it gave off a sense of tranquility.

Zhao Jie held up his umbrella and walked behind her.

There wasn't anyone else on the path. There was only the two of them. Occasionally, a palace maid or eunuch would pass by them and salute Zhao Jie. He would respond with "No need to salute" and continued walking behind Wei Luo.

A little while later, he slowly asked, "Is your hobby growing flowers at home?"

Wei Luo slightly paused in her steps. Empress Chen had asked had this question and that was her reply.

Just now, Empress Chen had asked all sorts of questions about her daily life. She seemed as if she was very interested about her life. Not only did she ask about what she normally liked to do, she also ask about her favorite foods, books...

Wei Luo had replied one by one. Unexpectedly, Zhao Jie had actually remembered her answers!

She stared at the ground beneath her and absentmindedly said, "En... Daddy built a flower shed in the backyard for me. When I have free time, I go there to pass the time.

Zhao Jie looked at the girl in front of him and continued asking, "You like to eat yuanbao wontons from Yu He?"

She lightly nodded.

"Is it tasty?"

"... Tastes pretty good."

One by one, Zhao Jie asked about the answers she had said. By

the end, Wei Luo was too lazy to explain her answers and only nodded in reply. Without being aware, they had arrived at the palace gates. The carriage to bring her back home was right in front of her. She couldn't wait to get on the carriage. Just as she had taken two steps forward, she suddenly thought of something, turned around, and faintly smiled at him with her pink cheeks. The soft glow on her face would move a person. "I'll be going first. Older brother Prince Jing, we'll separate at this point."

Zhao Jie was standing in place. As she was turning around, he called out, "Ah Luo."

She looked at him. Failing to understand why he called out, she asked, "Hmm?"

He lifted the corners of his lips and said, "In a few days, Liuli will be leaving the palace. She wanted this prince to pass on this message to you. She wants you to accompany her on her trip outside."

Wei Luo's response was sluggish, "Is there a reason why she's leaving the palace? Did Her Majesty agree?"

Empress Chen had already been making an exception when she allowed Liuli to leave the palace last time. She hadn't expected there would be a second time. Last time, it was because Zhao Jie pleaded for Liuli. What happened this time?

Zhao Jie explained, "En, this was Liuli's only request before her hairpin ceremony, so imperial mother agreed."

Oh... since it was like that, then there wasn't a reason for her to refuse. But, she thought about the last time that Zhao Liuli had left the place. She had said it would only be the two of them, but when they arrived at Rong Chun, Zhao Jie was also there! Would that happen again?

The doubt on her face was too obvious. Even if he wanted to ignore it, it wouldn't be possible. Zhao Jie curved his lips into a

smile and said, "I have to protect Liuli's safety, so naturally I'll also be going."

Wei Luo slowly said, "Oh." It wouldn't be good to be too obvious in her refusal. After hesitating for a time, she still nodded her head in agreement at the end, "Okay, I'll go. Just have her tell me about it when the time comes."

After saying good-bye, she stepped on the carriage's pedal and went inside the carriage.

She sat down in the carriage, put down the carriage's curtain embroidered with golden thread and cut off the line of sight between them.

For a long time, Zhao Jie watched as the flat-roof, black carriage went farther away before getting onto his horse and slowly riding in the rain.

Zhu Geng was following behind him. Seeing that Zhao Jie wasn't heading in the direction of his residence, there was burst of uncertainty in his heart. However, he didn't ask. Wherever the prince went, he only needed to follow.

Not much time later, he saw Zhao Jie stopping on a street on the western side. Zhao Jie closed his umbrella and walked inside Yu He.

It was raining outside, so there weren't many people in the restaurant. Zhao Jie casually found a table and sat down. The waiter came by to greet him and smiled as he asked, "What would this guest like to eat?"

He brushed off the water on his shoulder and said, "A bowl of yuanbao wontons."

The waiter said, "Okay." Seeing that he didn't want anything else, the waiter turned around and walked to the kitchen to place the order.

After tying the horses up, Zhu Geng went inside the restaurant.



His noble prince was actually inside eating a bowl of wontons! He walked forward in astonishment and stopped behind Zhao Jie. He tried opening his mouth to speak a few times before finally asking, "Prince, are you not going to... reveal the truth to House Wei's Fourth Miss?"

Zhu Geng had followed Zhao Jie for many years. Zhao Jie didn't hide anything from him, so he knew the feelings that his prince had towards that girl. After Zhao Jie had endured for so long, even he felt anxious as a bystander. Today, the prince had an opportunity to reveal the truth. So, why didn't he say anything?

He couldn't figure it out. After hesitating for a long time, he finally couldn't resist asking.

Zhao Jie's slightly paused in his movement. Soon after, he put down the porcelain spoon and thought about her expression today. He stroked his chin, thoughtfully smiled, and slowly said, "Can't you tell? She already knows."

# Chapter 71.1

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Zhao Jie had guessed correctly. Wei Luo knew what happened at Qian Temple.

Not only did she know, she had also decided to maintain a distance from him.

She knew that not only had he kissed her near Qian Temple's gate, he had also licked her lips! She clearly remembered that day. The hot spring near the peach tree grove had been too comfortable, so she had fallen asleep as she soaked in the hot spring and became drowsier and drowsier. Later, she had a faint impression of Zhao Jie carrying her onto the horse. When they were almost at Qian Temple, she had heard him when called out her name, but she was tired and didn't want to wake up. Who could have expected that he would lean over and kiss her forehead?

She was too startled and didn't dare to open her eyes, so she kept her eyes closed and pretended to still be asleep. But, his following action made her even shocked. He actually kissed her mouth!

On the surface, she acted as if she was sleeping so deeply that she couldn't perceive anything. In her heart, Wei Luo felt as if she were in a perilous position.

Why did Zhao Jie kiss her?

She wasn't stupid. Having already lived one lifetime, she had more experience than other people and knew what his action meant.

In the past, she had been unwilling to think about this. Zhao Jie treated her very well. He looked at her with single-minded devotion and his hands were always scorching hot when he hugged her. She had chosen to believe in her own lies and ignored his behavior. After all, he was nine years older than her. He had

watched her slowly grow up. How could he have these feelings towards her?

But, now, she couldn't continue ignoring this. He had kissed her when she was sleeping. When he was holding her that day, the scalding heat from his body almost melted her body.

Her big brother liked her. It was the like that a man had towards a woman instead of simple sibling affection.

For now, Wei Luo didn't know what to think. She deeply respected Zhao Jie and felt grateful towards him. It was probably because he had always taken care of her, protected her, and cleaned up her messes. But, she wasn't able to suddenly accept his feelings, so she decided to keep a distance between them.

Previously, they had been too close. Zhao Jie was a man. She was an unmarried girl. Men and women should keep their distance from each other. It wasn't good for them to be so close.

This was the reason why she was avoiding Zhao Jie today.

After Wei Luo came back to Duke Ying's residence, she was originally going to fourth branch's courtyard to pay Qin-shi a visit. However, just as she passed through the gate, Bai Lan walked towards her and said, "Miss, Marquis Ping Yuan's daughter is here."

Liang Yu Rong often visited here to play with Wei Luo, so this wasn't uncommon. The servant girls had already become accustomed to her visits, so they would directly bring her to the reception pavilion to wait.

Wei Luo nodded to show that she understood. Hearing that Bai Lan said Liang Yu Rong was at the reception pavilion, she lifted her skirt and went there herself.

Liang Yu Rong was sitting on a rosewood chair and drinking the tea in fascination. The tea was recently delivered in spring and called e mei xue ya. The tea was translucent and had a strongly

fragrant spiciness. She looked up and saw that Wei Luo had arrived. She quickly stood up and asked here, "I heard from Bai Lan that you went to the palace. What happened? Was Princess Tianji looking for you?"

Wei Luo shook her head and said, "It was Her Majesty that invited me to the palace."

Liang Yu Rong froze while she was pouring tea. She knew that Zhao Liuli often invited Wei Luo to the palace. But, did Her Majesty also often see Wei Luo? She curiously asked, "Why did Her Majesty invite you to the palace?"

Wei Luo explained that Princess Tianji would soon reach a marriagable age and had ordered her to be Princess Tianji's zanzhe for her hairpin ceremony.

As Liang Yu Rong listened, she showed an expression of realization, "So, it was like that."

This was a good thing. She turned her head as she carefully looked at Wei Luo on both sides. Her expression showed that she was really proud of Wei Luo and felt as if she also shared her honor. In a very pleased tone, she said, "Isn't this great? There will definitely be many young women attending the ceremony. For Her Majesty to select you instead of them, it must be because she likes your well-behaved deportment. It means you're the best person out of all the other young women. After Princess Tianji's hairpin ceremony, your reputation will definitely significantly increase."

Wei Luo agreed that this was true after thinking about it. But, she wasn't familiar with the customs related to the hairpin ceremony, so she felt somewhat anxious. It wouldn't be good if she messed up.

Luckily, Empress Chen had said she would have someone carefully teach her. After hearing those words, her heart felt much more at ease.

After they finished talking about this, Wei Luo picked up the lotus pattern teacup, tilted her head, and asked, "Why were you looking for me today?"

Liang Yu Rong wasn't a bashful girl. She had a straightforward personality. Normally, she would directly speak her thoughts. But, this time, she blinked and asked in a roundabout way, "Did older brother Chang Yin say anything when you gave him the pastries and candy?"

So, she had come here to ask about this.

Wei Luo's good mood diminished. She held her cheeks and deliberately stretched out saying, "Well." Then, she pretended to think and after a long time, she slowly replied, "He didn't say anything."

Liang Yu Rong's face showed her disappointment.

Actually, she was lying to her. When Wei Chang Yin accepted the pastries and candy, his smile was very warm and he joked, "I only gave her candy, but she gave me three bags of pastries and candy in return. This transaction was very profitable."

But, she wouldn't tell Liang Yu Rong this. Before Wei Chang Yin's leg was healed, she didn't want them to become too involved.

Liang Yu Rong's large, bright eyes had immediately dimmed. A moment later, she didn't give up and continued to asked, "Did he say if there were tasty or not? Or, did he say if he liked them or not?"

Wei Luo's face didn't redden or twitch as she continued to lie. She seemed sincere as she said, "I left right after delivering the pastries and candy to eldest cousin Chang Yin. I didn't see if he ate any or not, so I naturally don't know if he like them."

Liang Yu Rong's spirit was deflated. She listlessly sat back in the chair and didn't say anything else after this setback.

As they were talking, a servant boy hurriedly rushed past them.

Behind him, there was an old man with a white beard. The old man was carrying a medicine box. He was probably a doctor. Wei Luo walked out of the reception pavilion and called out to the servant boy, "What happened? Who's sick?"

Hearing her voice, the servant boy stopped, saluted, and said, "To respond to Fourth Miss, its Banyan Tree Courtyard's First Young Master. His leg is hurting."

This wasn't a big or small thing. After all, so many years had passed. He had long become used to this pain. However, every time his leg ached, it was still difficult to endure the pain.

Hearing that the matter wasn't good, Liang Yu Rong couldn't resist asking, "Is his leg illness... serious?"

The servant boy replied, "It's probably because the weather has been too humid lately, so his illness is slightly serious than usual."

Seeing that he had been delayed for too long and worried that this would interfere with Wei Chang Yin's treatment, he hurriedly took his leave with Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong and continued leading the doctor to Banyan Tree Courtyard.

Liang Yu Rong was still worried. She walked forward, grasped Wei Luo's hand, and said, "Let's go visit older brother Chang Yin, okay?"

Wei Luo originally didn't want to let Liang Yu Rong go there. If Liang Yu Rong saw him again, then she wouldn't be able to break their connection. However, when she thought about it again, if Liang Yu Rong saw the injury on Wei Chang Yin's leg, then she would clearly see the obstruction between them and wouldn't continue having thoughts that she shouldn't have. At the thought of this, Wei Luo nodded and said, "Okay."

## Chapter 71.2

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When they arrived at Banyan Tree Courtyard, they saw the doctor treating Wei Chang Yin's leg.

Hearing that they had come to see Wei Chang Yin, First Madam didn't stop them. She invited them into the inner room and was barely able to force herself to smile as she said, "Ah Luo... Thank you for kind intentions."

The smell of medicine was so strong that it seemed to flood the inner room. It assaulted their senses and irritated their noses and mouths.

Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong couldn't get used to such a strong medicinal smell at first. As soon as they entered, they started choking from the smell. After they finally adapted to the smell and walked behind the lacquered, yellow rosewood divider screen that was carved with stylized clouds and had a landscape painting in the center, they saw Wei Chang Yin stiffly sitting in a chair and soaking his legs in a wooden barrel.

Little by little, the doctor added medicine into the barrel. There was a fire beneath the wooden barrel and white mist came from the water. A glance showed that the water was very hot. Wei Chang Yin's handsome face was deathly pale and there was sweat on his forehead. He looked very different from his usually elegant appearance.

Even though he was in pain, his aura of calm and quietness didn't change. He only closed his eyes and pressed his lips together without saying a word.

He had probably heard their footsteps. He opened his eyes to look at them and was barely able to force out a smile as he said, "Ah Luo and younger sister Yu Rong have come..."

Liang Yu Rong hadn't seen such a scene before. Inside her

sleeves, she clenched her hands and clutched her silk handkerchief. She felt awful and worried for Wei Chang Yin. She hesitated with answering for a long time before stepping forward and softly asking, "Is older brother Chang Yin in a lot of pain?"

Wei Chang Yin restrained the pain in his eyes and weakly said, "Doesn't hurt too much."

How could it not hurt?

His face looked terrible and his clothes were soaked with his sweat. How could it not hurt?

Liang Yu Rong and Wei Luo stood at the side. Originally, they had wanted to see if he was okay. But, now after seeing this sight, they wished they hadn't come here. If they hadn't, they wouldn't see the sight of him in so much pain and feel so bad for him.

They stood at the side for a while. They couldn't help or do anything useful. To not hinder the doctor as he treated Wei Chang Yin, they said good-bye to First Madam and left.

Before leaving, as she was turning around, Liang Yu Rong's inadvertently saw an open bag of pastries on the square table near Wei Chang Yin's bed. It was the soy flour pastry with red bean paste that she had bought for him. There were several layers of red beans in the pastry and it was sprinkled with a thin layer of glutinous rice flower. It was sweet and fragrant without being greasy. She had purchased eight pieces of this pastry and now there was only two left.

Did he like them?

Liang Yu Rong froze for a moment and turned her head to look at Wei Chang Yin.

Coincidentally, Wei Chang Yin was also looking at her and their eyes met. He curved his lips into a faint smile. His face was gentle. Even while he was in such a sorry state, he was still calm and composed.



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After Wei Luo sent Liang Yu Rong off, a few days peacefully passed

Today was March 15th and the day that Zhao Liuli would be leaving the palace.

Wei Luo woke up early. She sat in front the mirror to apply makeup. Normally, she didn't like to use too much cosmetics. It was probably because she was young and her skin was at its best. Putting on makeup would only hide her natural skin color. Today, she didn't apply anything on her skin either. She only darkened her eyebrows with a brush and used a little bit of pink lipstick. Looking into the mirror, her lips were pink and glossy.

She changed into a pink top with a cloud pattern and a moon white crepe skirt with butterflies and flowers. She had Jin Lu arrange her hair into two loops at the top of her head and inserted a golden flower hairpin inlaid with precious stones. Now, everything was sorted out and she was ready to go out. Just as she put on her satin shoes embroidered with plum flowers, she heard a servant girl come inside and say, "Fourth Miss, Princess Tianji has arrived."

She nodded. She was ready to go out and and leave Duke Ying's residence.

In front of the entrance, there was a Eight Treasure carriage with a bluish green cover. Yang Zhen was stand at the side of the carriage and wearing a black robe.

Seeing that she had come out, Yang Zhen nodded at her in greeting.

Wei Luo stepped on the carriage's pedal to enter the carriage. She lifted up the curtain to look and slightly paused in moving.

Not only was Zhao Liuli in the carriage, Zhao Jie was also inside. He was wearing a light green robe with a python pattern.

Zhao Jie was sitting the furthest inside. Noticing her gaze, he lifted his eyes to look at her. His gaze was deep without any concealment.

After being gaze by him like that, Wei Luo felt fearful and almost turned around to leave the carriage.

Unfortunately, Zhao Liuli was a step faster. In high spirits, she pulled Wei Luo down to sit next to her. Her eyes were as bright as the full moon. "Ah Luo, today, you look prettier than before."

Wei Luo absent-mindedly nodded, "I put on lipstick."

Her seating position wasn't good. Originally, there was a distance between Zhao Liuli and Zhao Jie. Now, she was sitting between them. On her left, there was Zhao Liuli. On her right, there was Zhao Jie. It wasn't good no matter how she looked at it. Although she wasn't cramped, having Zhao Jie's hands near her hands, it was still too intimately close.

The carriage was spacious. If Zhao Jie wanted to move to farther away, he could. But, he acted as if he didn't notice anything and didn't move.

Wei Luo tried to endure it, but she finally tilted her head and curved her almond eyes as she asked, "Older brother Prince Jing, could you sit a little closer to the inside?"

He thoughtfully looked at her with his eyebrows raised. Instead of moving, he curved his lips into a smile and said, "Why? Do you feel crowded?"

She nodded and said, "Yes."

After a long time, he finally moved and sat down on the other side of the carriage, which was directly in front of her.

Wei Luo, "..."

This arrangement was even worse. His legs were long. If he didn't retract them, they would easily touch her calf. This sense of

pressure was even worse then he was sitting next to her. Wei Luo puffed out her cheeks and decided that he was doing this deliberately. She moved her legs closer to Liuli's side to avoid touching him. She didn't continue look at him. She turned her head and attentively listened to Zhao Liuli.

Zhao Jie hands were placed on top of each other. His dark eyes looked at the girl in front of him. An imperceptible smile flashed through his eyes. There was a hidden meaning in that smile.

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In half a month, it would be Zhao Liuli's hairpin ceremony. The reason she came out today was to buy an item.

The carriage stopped in front of a jade store. She led Wei Luo down the carriage.

Walking into the store, their eyes were filled with glittering jewels. There were all sorts of jade jewelry that dazzled their eyes. Zhao Liuli walked to the shopkeeper. Her eyes turned and she whispered, "Do you have something that comes in a pair?"

This shopkeeper had been in business for many years. His experience was ample, so he naturally knew what she wanted. Seeing the two refined girls in front of him with noble auras, his insight told him that a large profit was waiting for him. He hurriedly said, "I do. Please wait here for a bit. I'll bring them out." Not long after, he came out from the back of the store with a vermillion box carved with blossoming tree peonies. He put the box in front of them and opened it, "This is the store's collected treasure. Please look."

On top of the red silk, there was a pair of white jade pendants. These first class jades had a flawlessly exquisite color and luster. However, the shopkeeper wasn't pointing out this aspect. In order to let them see what was special about these jade pendants, he brought the jade underneath the sunlight. Underneath the sunlight, they saw that there was a concentric knot in each of the

jade pieces. This was extremely rare by itself. In addition, the concentric knot in each jade was very similar. Therefore, the shopkeeper named this "concentric knot jade".

Zhao Liuli liked them at first sight. These two jade pendants could be worn around their neck and hidden in their clothes. No one would find out.

## Chapter 71.3

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The shopkeeper did his business sincerely. Seeing that she liked the jade, he didn't try to swindle her. His price was reasonable for this quality of jade. However, the price of a thousand and eight hundred coins would be extremely expensive for an ordinary person. Even if an average person didn't eat and drink and diligently worked for an entire lifetime, he or she wouldn't be able to save this much money!

Zhao Liuli didn't have a concept of money. Besides, when she left the palace today, Mama Qiu had given her a lot of money. She had more than enough to buy these jades. She had the palace servant girl pay for the jades, then she happily took the two pieces of jades into her hand and left the store without even taking the box.

At the store's entrance, Yang Zhen was standing as straight as a pine tree.

Zhao Liuli looked in the direction of the carriage. She checked that Zhao Jie hadn't come out before walking over to Yang Zhen. She held up his hand and placed one of the jade into his palms. Her little face smiled, "Today is older brother Yang Zhen's birthday. This is my gift to you."

Yang Zhen was surprised for a moment. He hadn't expected that she would remember.

"There's another piece that's mine." She held the remaining piece in her palm. She stared at him as she said, "Older brother Yang Zhen, you have to wear this every day. I'll inspect you everyday to check that you're wearing it."

His heart moved. There was finally a disturbance in his indifferent and silent eyes. He looked at Zhao Liuli with deep eyes. He tried his best to repress his emotions. If they weren't outside on a busy street and if Prince Jing wasn't sitting in the carriage, he wouldn't be able to resist bringing her close to his chest and

hugging her. A long time later, he finally nodded and solemnly said, "Okay."

Zhao Liuli smiled in satisfaction.

After she sat down in the carriage again, she impatiently had Wei Luo help her put on the jade necklace.

Zhao Jie glanced at them.

She didn't tell Zhao Jie that this jade was part of a pair or why she wanted to buy it. Zhao Jie didn't ask her about it either.

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After they shopped in the morning, noon soon arrived and it was time to eat lunch.

Zhao Liuli asked Zhao Jie where they would be eating.

After thinking about it, he said, "Let's go to Yu He."

Zhao Liuli wasn't familiar with these restaurants and was fine with any place he wanted to go to.

A little while later, they arrived at Yu He's entrance and came out of the carriage. Just as Zhao Liuli was going to walk inside the restaurant, Zhao Jie stopped her by saying, "Liuli, there's a tofu store not far from here. I heard that you recently wanted to eat jellied tofu. The flavor that the store makes is pretty good, but they're only open until noon."

After hearing this, Zhao Liuli was very excited. After thinking about it, she said, "Then I'll go there with older brother Yang Zhen and come back here after I finish eating the jellied tofu. Second brother and Ah Luo can go inside to request a private room and start ordering food."

Wei Luo frowned. Didn't this mean she would be alone with Zhao Jie when they were waiting? She opened her mouth to say she also wanted to go with them, but unfortunately, Zhao Liuli had already left with Yang Zhen. In addition, those two had deep feelings for

each other that were as thick and sweet as honey. They finally had a chance to be together without other people around. How could she follow them? Wei Luo looked at their back figures and could only give up. She obediently followed Zhao Jie inside Yu He.

At this time, there weren't many people inside and there were still private rooms available upstairs.

The waiter led them to a private room on the western side, pushed open the door, and respectively said, "Please enter."

The spacious private room was fairly neat and faced the street.

Zhao Jie sat down at the round table and ordered various dishes, then he finally looked at Wei Luo and said, "And a bowl of yuanbao wontons."

One by one, the waiter listed out the ordered items to confirm. Then at the end, he recommended, "Our restaurant has made a new dish. It's called lovers' lotus seed congee. It's most suitable for people like Sir and Miss. Would Sir like to order two bowls?"

Was he treating them as a couple?

Wei Luo discontentedly looked up at the waiter. What kind of eyes did he have?!

Zhao Jie was very cheerful and quietly laughed. He looked at the girl across from him, "Ah Luo, do you want to drink this?"

Wei Luo pursed her lips and without even thinking about it, she refused, "I don't want it."

The waiter bumped into the wall, touched his nose, smiled, didn't think anything of this, turned around, and went to the kitchen to order the food.

After the waiter left, there was only Wei Luo and Zhao Jie in the room.

Normally, they usually had endless words to say when they were together. But, now, she was deliberately ignoring him and the

private room was very quiet. However, Zhao Jie didn't seem to feel uncomfortable. He comfortably sat at the round table carved with lions and his phoenix eyes looked at her for a long time.

He still hasn't looked enough?

At first, Wei Luo ignored him. If he wanted to look, he could look. She would just ignore him. After a while, she finally couldn't tolerate it anymore. Her almond eyes stared back at him, "Older brother Prince Jing, don't look at me."

In a deep and low voice, Zhao Jie said, "Oh, why can't I look?"

She thought of the recent words said by the waiter and deliberated her words before saying, "Other people will misunderstand."

Even though he already knew everything, he still smiled and asked, "What will they misunderstand?"

Wei Luo chose to be silent and didn't continue speaking.

But, Zhao Jie didn't intend to let her go. His dark eyes stared at her and he slowly said, "Ah Luo, what will they misunderstand?"

She refused to answer, so he stood up and walked to her. He placed one hand on the round Chinese cedar table, then he slowly leaned over her and said, "Tell me."

Wei Luo reflexively pushed him away. But his chest was as hard and solid as a mountain. She wasn't able to push him away. He slowly moved forward and she could only slowly retreat. But, the Chinese cedar kaiguang stool beneath her wasn't steady, so it gradually started to tilt over. Her body started to fall backwards.

Her eyes widen and she subconsciously grabbed Zhao Jie's sleeve.

Fortunately, Zhao Jie was able to timely respond. One hand held the back of her head and the other hand tightly held her waist as they both fell to the ground. He closely held and protected her so she didn't suffer from the slightest injury.



However, their bodies were very close to each other without any distance between them. The two small peaches on Wei Luo's chest were pressed against his hard chest. They had already felt sore to begin with and after being pressed against him, it hurt so much that her face paled.

Zhao Jie seemed to have also felt something. His hand came out from behind her head and he slightly propped up his upper body. But, he didn't let go of her. His very hard and long legs were still sticking close to her legs. One leg was even inserted itself between her legs and pushed them open.

The difference between a man and a woman was embodied in the finest detail at this moment. Her body was soft, but his body was hard and powerful.

Wei Luo's small face was blushing. She wasn't able to even slightly move underneath his body much less get up, "Let me go..."

Zhao Jie didn't move. One hand was on her side and the other hand was tightly wrapped around her slender waist. His tall body was covering her as he stared into her eyes.

His eyes held a tide of deep emotions that seemed to drown her.

Why weren't Liuli and Yang Zhen back yet?

Wei Luo almost wanted to cry.

But, then strange sounds came from the next room. It seemed as if it was a man and a woman calling out together ambiguously and gently. One voice was coarse and the other was soft.

The sound insulation for the private rooms weren't very good. Wei Luo could clearly hear the sounds from the next room. She even heard the female calling out, "Ah.... Don't bite there..."

# Chapter 72

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Zhao Jie must have already heard their voices. The hand that was holding her became rigid.

Wei Luo's entire body wasn't good. She raised her small hand to push at Zhao Jie's chest and reminded him, "Older brother Prince Jing, let me up..."

His tall body was pressing her against the floor and his legs were intertwined with hers... This position was dubious no matter how one looked at it.

Although Wei Luo had lived two lives, she had never been affection with another person, much less have her body so dubiously close to a man. He was right above her. If she looked up, she would see his inherent strength and power that was related to his status. He didn't even have to do anything to take away her escape path.

Instead of letting her go, Zhao Jie leaned over and tightened his hold on her. With their cheeks close to each other, he hoarsely whispered, "Ah Luo, listen."

He wanted her to listen. As for what he wanted her to hear... the answer was self-evident.

Wei Luo tilted her head to hide from his touch. Her cheeks and ears were red. Without even thinking about it, she refused, "I don't want to listen."

Although she said these words, the voices from the other private room still intermittently traveled over here...

From the other side of the wall, remembering that she was in a public place, the female suppressed her voice when she whimpered, "Heir, this isn't good... other people will hear us."

The man that had been called "Heir" quietly harrumphed. There was something in his mouth, so his voice was unclear when he

said, "What's there to be afraid of? Would they dare to come in to look?"

Immediately after, he repeatedly bit her until she tearfully cried out delicately. But, there was also a sense of excitement that was difficult to suppress.

Although the voices behind them had stopped, they could guess what was happening without even thinking. In addition, from time to time, the female would complain, "Brother-in-law... slow down... too fierce..."

Although Wei Luo wasn't easily embarrassed, she couldn't avoid blushing this time. Her usually pink cheeks were thoroughly red. Her long eyelashes trembled before going down and blocking the sight of his bright and vivid eyes, "Let me up..."

Zhao Jie's chest was burning hot. He propped himself up to look at her. He only saw her biting her pink lips. She seemed as if she was going to fly into a rage from the humiliation. He knew that she felt embarrassed. He also knew that there was a time to stop while he was ahead, so he didn't continue pressing her down. He got up, then he helped her up from the ground. With effort, he pressed down the fire in his heart and appeared nonchalant as he dusted off the dust on her body. He held her hand as he brought her closer to him, "Are you hurt from falling?"

Wei Luo took back her hand. She wouldn't allow him to touch her, "Doesn't hurt."

After saying this, she looked in the direction of the door. The door was tightly closed. Zhao Liuli and Yang Zhen still hadn't returned. Why did it take them so long to eat jellied tofu? Her eyebrows were furrowed. She really didn't want to be alone with Zhao Jie.

Zhao Jie's hand stopped in mid-air. Soon after, his lips curved into a smile. Originally, he hadn't wanted to say this so early. But, her display of avoiding him was too obvious and his heart felt very

unhappy. Did he stop being her big brother just because she knew that he liked her? This time, he didn't let her evade. He grasped her small hand that had been hanging at her side. He wouldn't tolerate her rejecting him. He shackled her movement by pulling her forward until her legs were between his legs and placing his other hand on her back. He lifted his head to look at her almond eyes, "Ah Luo, do you dislike big brother now?"

The young girl's body was petite. There was more than enough space for her. In addition, she wasn't tall. When he was sitting and she was standing, she was only half a head taller than him. Currently, his forehead was pressed against her. They were so close that their breaths were intertwined together. She only felt that her nose was itchy and felt slightly uncomfortable.

Wei Luo pursed her pink lips. After thinking for a while, she slowly said, "... I don't."

She didn't dislike or hate him. It was only that the like that she had for him wasn't the same as the like that he had for her. She regarded him as an older brother that deserved her respect and didn't have other types of feelings. But the person that she had regarded as a big brother had secretly kissed her and tightly hugged her. These were intimate things that should only be done between a man and woman in a relationship.

Wei Luo's heart was in chaos.

Zhao Jie's lips were lifted up into a smile. He let go of her hand, embraced her waist with both of his hands, and brought her closer to him.

While Wei Luo was whole-heartedly thinking about his words, he had decreased the distance between them without her awareness. She didn't know how intimate their current positions were.

She was standing between his legs and his arms were around her waist. Their cheeks were close together.

Like a big wolf that was trying to deceive a little girl, Zhao Jie slowly and hoarsely whispered in a warm and gentle tone, "Then why are you avoiding me?"

Wei Luo thought of something and the tips of her ears turned red. She turned her head away to avoid his gaze and didn't say anything.

He chuckled, "That day at Qian Temple, you were awake, right?"

He had even guessed this correctly... After she thought about it, his guess was reasonable. After that day, she was always avoiding him. He was so clever. Of course, he would realize this.

Wei Luo still didn't say anything in reply.

If she didn't want to speak, he naturally had a way to get her to speak.

Zhao Jie looked at her small, delicate, fair face. His thin lips went forward and he kissed her forehead, "When did you wake up? Was it when I kissed you like this?"

Incredulous by his actions, Wei Luo's body stiffened and she turned her head.

There was a smile on his face as he looked at her mouth that was slightly opened from surprise. He asked, "Or, was it when I kissed you like this..."

After saying this, he softly bit her bottom lip.

# Chapter 73.1

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Startled, Wei Luo opened her eyes wider. She couldn't believe that he actually did this again, especially when she was still awake. At first, he didn't go deep into her mouth. He only sucked her bottom lip twice and lingeringly continued to lick her lips. She didn't dare to move and could only numbly allow him to eat her tofu.

Very quickly, her mind started working. She finally remembered that they were at Yu He. Zhao Liuli and Yang Zhen would be returning at any time...

Wei Luo didn't dare to imagine the consequences of them seeing this. She finally remembered that she had to push him away and she raised her hand. But, his embrace was firm. Even after she pushed his chest for a long time, she didn't succeed. Instead, he bit her in response!

The bite didn't hurt and felt more like a slight warning.

Zhao Jie's kiss was so intense that she had no idea how to resist.

The kiss from last time could be continued as insignificant. He had stopped after getting a taste. This time, he was really trying to devour her. Taking advantage of her open mouth, he entered her mouth and entangled with her tongue. She couldn't say any words and could only sweetly and softly whimper.

From time to time, she could hear the footsteps of other customers from outside the door. The sounds felt so close that it felt as if they were walking right next to her. The clamor from the hallway made the room feel even quieter. Wei Luo couldn't hear anyone else's voice. She could only hear the interweaving sound of Zhao Jie and her breathing. It was intimate and impure like sound from next door...

Her heart was like a beating drum. Her entire body was as soft

and weak as cotton. She didn't even have the strength to lift her hands.

Not much later, someone pushed open the door. The cordial voice of the waiter was heard before it spontaneously ended, "Customers, your food is here..."

The waiter stood in place and awkwardly looked at the two kissing people in the room. The tall man was holding the petite girl while unhesitatingly kissing her. Even standing at the door, he could hear them. A long time later, the waiter returned to his senses and retreated outside while smiling apologetically, "You two continue...."

Zhao Jie finally let go of Wei Luo. Her lips were bright red and slightly swollen from his biting. He lifted his hand to whistle to the waiter without turning his head, "Wait, is there another private room? We want to change to another room."

Wei Luo's lipstick had been entirely eaten by Zhao Jie. Her cheeks were a deep red from blushing. Her big and dark eyes were shimmering like water underneath sunlight. Her appearance was innocent and made a person want to pamper her.

The waiter hurriedly stopped his steps, turned around, and nodded while bowing, "There is. Is the customer unsatisfied with this room? Please wait. This small one will bring you to another room once the room is prepared."

She wasn't merely unsatisfied, but extremely unsatisfied... the sound of the people next door making love was so loud that it couldn't be ignored. Who would still be able to eat? In addition, if it wasn't for those people, Zhao Jie might not have kissed her... Wei Luo couldn't resist silently criticizing.

The waiter had them wait for a little bit while he ordered someone else to tidy up another room. Not much later, the other room was prepared and he led Zhao Jie and Wei Luo over there.

Just as they exited the room, they coincidentally saw the two people from next door also leaving.

There was a man and woman. The man was walking in front. The man had a handsome and heroic face that was like white jade. He was born with a rather outstanding and romantic appearance and had the elegant image of a young master. He was neatly dressed in a light blue robe with a jade waist accessory. If she hadn't just heard his actions, she would probably be deceived by his appearance.

The young woman behind him was about fifteen or sixteen years old. She had a delicate and attractive appearance. Although she wasn't extremely beautiful, she had an extremely delicate temperament that attracted people. All men liked this type of woman, who was soft, agreeable, and meticulously caring. This type of personality satisfied a man's desire for control. If they were slightly charming during love, they would be even more pleasing.

There was a slight change in Wei Luo's expression as she remembered hearing her call out "brother-in-law".

It really... made her feel a new level of respect for her performance.

The man seemed to be acquainted with Zhao Jie. Originally, the man's head was lowered as he arranged the creases on his sleeves that had a pattern of golden lotus branches. When he looked up, he inadvertently saw Zhao Jie. He raised his eyebrows and smiled, "Hey, isn't this Chang Sheng\*?"

\* (T/N: Chang Sheng is Zhao Jie's childhood nickname.)

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Acquaintance? Friend?

At Zhao Jie's side, Wei Luo had returned to her usual spirit.

The man's eyes shifted from Zhao Jie to her. He smiled and his tone became more intimate, "This is..."



Zhao Jie furrowed his eyebrows. He wasn't happy with how he was looking at Wei Luo. His tone was cold when he said, "Shizi, why do you have the free time to come here?"

(T/N: Shizi means heir apparent to a noble title. I'll be using heir for the rest of the translation for simplicity.)

This person was Zhao Jue. He was the son of Zhao Jie's second uncle, Prince Rui. Prince Rui's wife spoiled her son and couldn't bear to discipline him since he was a child. Prince Rui had also failed to discipline him. Now, at twenty-three, he still disregarded authority and deviated from societal morals. He was arrogant and stubborn.

Compared to Li Song, he was completely lacking in every aspect.

## Chapter 73.2

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Zhao Jue relied on the fact that his father was Emperor Chong Zhen's younger brother to obtain a position without responsibilities in the Ministry of Revenue. Although he had an official position, he didn't act according to standards. Most of the officials in the Ministry of Revenue were dissatisfied with him, but due to his father's status, they could only be secretly angry with him and didn't dare to speak out against him. Not only that, he was a womanizer with a voracious desire for the joy between men and women. Although he had a wife and three concubines, he still messed around with the servant girls in Prince Rui's residence.

Now, he wouldn't even let off his wife's younger sister. What a perverted beast.

Wei Luo silently thought.

She had just recently heard their voices through the wall, so Wei Luo was unable to directly look at them right now. However, those two were ignorant of this and refused to move from blocking their path.

The girl behind Zhao Jue was blushing. Her eyes had the radiance of springtime scenes. A glance would show that she had been recently ferociously loved. She was probably feeling embarrassed. She hurriedly went back to looking down after raising her head and looking at Wei Luo for a moment.

Zhao Jue disdainfully smiled. He leisurely fanned the jade fan in his hand. "Ah Wu was busy today and couldn't go outside today, so she pleaded with this heir to accompany her younger sister in taking a stroll outside. Since this heir was free, I agreed to her request. This is Ah Xuan's first time in the capital. There are many things unfamiliar to her."

The Ah Wu he mentioned was his wife, Xiang Wu. Xiang Wu referred to Xiang Xuan as her younger sister, but they weren't

biological sisters. They were cousins that were related on the paternal side.

Zhao Jie wasn't interested in his affairs. He had only casually asked this question. Now that he asked and was answered, he would naturally be leaving. He moved forward and said, "This being the case. I won't bother the heir in his interest. I'll visit Prince Rui's residence on another day to talk."

Finished speaking, he led Wei Luo to leave with him.

Unwilling to give up, Zhao Jue blocked his way. His gaze fell on Wei Luo's body. "Ai, it's so rare for us to meet. Why are you leaving so quickly? Is Chang Sheng familiar with Duke Ying's granddaughter? How come I've never heard of this? Duke Ying is an obstinate old man. You dare to do something with his granddaughter..."

The more he spoke, the more indecent his words were. He even reached his hand out to try to touch Wei Luo's shoulder.

Zhao Jie grabbed his hand that had reached halfway. His gaze was ice cold as he merciless held Zhao Jue's wrist until his bones made a sound. "She's accompanying Liuli. It's not what you're thinking of. Don't touch her or this prince will be impolite towards you."

Zhao Jue didn't expect that his reaction would be so big. He endured his pain as he said, "Isn't it only..."

Just as he said to this part, he immediately stopped speaking after seeing Zhao Jie coldly looking at him.

It was only now that Zhao Jie let go of Zhao Jue's wrist and continued leading Wei Luo to the other private room.

Wei Luo followed behind him. When she passed by Zhao Jue, she couldn't resist slanting her head to look at him.

The young girl's gaze was cold. It was even colder than Zhao Jie's. Her eyes held a cold and cryptic inquiry with a difficult to

understand hostility. Without any reason, a person would become apprehensive from her gaze. Zhao Jue was frozen by this gaze and even forgot to react.

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Wei Luo thought as she walked. So that person was Zhao Jue.

This was the person that pushed Wei Chang Yin off a horse, broke his muscles and bones, and made her eldest cousin into a handicapped person that would never be able to stand up in this lifetime. While her eldest cousin Wei Chang Yin was sitting in a wheelchair, endured the pain caused by his leg problems every year, wouldn't even dare to like someone, and kept pushing the girl that he liked further and further away... This person was standing here perfectly all right and having an affair with another woman. Zhao Jue was the source of tragedy between Wei Chang Yin and Liang Yu Rong.

Wei Luo had a long face and her mood was heavy.

She followed Zhao Jie into a private room and silently sat down on a rosewood stool carved with lions. She had already lost the shy expression from before.

The waiter brought up the eight meat dishes and eight vegetarian dishes. There was also a clear turtle soup simmered with fish. He also deliberately put a bowl of yuanbao wonton soup in front of her. The dishes prepared by Yu He were very good. The wonton soup by itself was memorable enough. The fresh, fragrant, and translucent soup was made with chicken broth and also had a layer of tiny shrimp sprinkled on top. The thin and tender wonton skin seemed to melt as it entered one's mouth. The wontons were fragile and tender. If one ate the wonton with a spoonful of soup, then it was truly the most delicious food on earth.

Unfortunately, at this moment, Wei Luo wasn't in the mood to eat wontons. She held her small face and thought of the scene she had just saw.

Xiang Wu was the daughter of the Minister of Rites, Xiang Xing Zhou. Xiang Xuan's father was Xiang Xing Zhou's younger brother from a concubine mother. One daughter was born from the legal wife. The other daughter was born from a concubine. With his own abilities, Xiang Xing Zhou had become an official. Xiang Xing Fan had achieved nothing. Seeing that his daughter had grown up, he wanted to send her to the capital and have Xiang Wu bring her around to various female nobility gatherings, so that she would be able to find a good marriage. This was how Xiang Xuan came to the capital.

Xiang Wu was a beauty with an elegant temperament, but she was too strong-minded. Perhaps, this was the reason that Zhao Jue wasn't attracted her. As for Xiang Xuan... Wei Luo remembered that in the end, Xiang Wu found out about Zhao Jue and Xiang Wu's adultery. Xiang Wu wasn't a person that would suffer in silence. She immediately told this matter to her father, Xiang Xing Zhou, and third uncle Xing Xing Fan and had Xiang Xuan driven out of Prince Rui's residence.

Without any other options, Xiang Xuan could only plead with Zhao Jue to accept her as a concubine. Unfortunately, by this time, Zhao Jue had already lost interest in her and was unconcerned about her problem. Unable to enter Prince Rui's residence and without her purity, she finally figured out a method. She seduced Liang Yu when he was drunk and made him believe that he had taken her virginity. Using this method, she entered Marquis Ping Yuan's residence as Liang Yu's concubine.

She was a person that was never satisfied. Instead of sincerely repenting and turning over a new leaf by obediently and honestly serving Liang Yu, she set her heart on climbing up. It was also said that she and Liang Yu Rong didn't get along. Not only that, she angered Marquis Ping Yuan's wife so much that she became ill.

After Liang Yu Rong died, Wei Luo found out about this from Liang Yu Rong's personal servant girl.

She wouldn't allow this type of scheming woman to enter Marquis Ping Yuan's residence in this lifetime and harm Liang Yu Rong's entire family.

Wei Luo's thoughts had flown away. She didn't seem to notice that was another person sitting near her.

## Chapter 73.3

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Zhao Jie personally poured a cup of tea, pushed the glazed white porcelain cup with a colorful magnolia flower pattern in front of her, gestured with his chin, and asked, "What are you thinking about?"

Wei Luo came back to her senses. She slanted her head to look at him and thought about him kissing her in the private room... They were also seen by the waiter... Her little face immediately blushed and she dully said, "Nothing important."

He quietly laughed and didn't continue asking about that question. Instead, he asked, "Ah Luo, are you clear about big brother's feelings?"

Just as Wei Luo was about to reply, she suddenly saw a trace of pink on his lips. After she carefully looked, she realized that it was her lipstick. It must have rubbed off on him when he was kissing her... Fortunately, it wasn't too obvious because she was wearing light pink lipstick today. However, if a person came close to Zhao Jie, they would definitely be able to see it. No wonder Zhao Jie had looked at them with a dubious expression in his eyes!

Wei Luo suddenly felt that she had lost her reputation. It was entirely Zhao Jie's fault!

Fortunately, Zhao Liuli hadn't returned yet to see this. If Liuli saw this, even if her mouth was as long as her body, she wouldn't be able to explain her innocence.

She didn't answer his question. She angrily pointed at the lipstick on his lips, "Wipe it away."

Zhao Jie wasn't sure what she wanted, so he asked, "What?"

She pursed her lips and explained, "My lipstick... It's on your lips."

Originally, she thought he would feel embarrassed. She wouldn't

have guessed that the smile in his eyes would deepen. Not only was he not worried, he calmly used his thumb to wipe, "Here?"

No, it wasn't rubbed away at all. Wei Luo shook her head and continued pointing, "It's a little further up."

He wiped again, "Here?"

It was still wrong. He went in the wrong direction. Wei Luo was worried about delaying this. Liuli and Yang Zhen would be coming back soon. She could only take out her handkerchief and go forward to help him wipe away the lipstick. After she finished wiping, she carefully looked at this spot. She felt relieved after seeing that there wasn't a trace left. She nodded and was about to go back to her seat. But, Zhao Jie suddenly held her hand and said, "Ah Luo..."

At the same time, Zhao Liuli's voice came from outside, "Is it this room? You wouldn't have made a mistake, right?"

After she said this, the doors were pushed open.

Wei Luo hurriedly took back her hand and looked at the doors.

The doorway and the round table carved with lions were separated by a divider screen with a painting of birds in the center. When Zhao Liuli walked past the divider screen, Wei Luo had just sat down in her seat. Zhao Liuli happily walked to her side and brought out an oiled paper packet in front of her.

"Ah Luo, look. These are candied fruit sticks that I bought with older brother Yang Zhen. I just had a bite. It's really delicious..."

There were different types of candied fruit sticks inside the oiled paper. There were ones made entirely of hawthorn fruit and other ones made with a mix of hawthorn fruit and walnuts, cherries, or oranges. A layer of syrup had been poured over the fruit, then a thick layer of sesame had been sprinkled on top. A person would feel hungry just looking at this candy.

Wei Luo hadn't moved yet.



On the side, Zhao Jie said, "Let's eat lunch before eating the hawthorn candy."

Zhao Liuli obediently agreed. She always listened to Zhao Jie's words and didn't dare to be disobedient towards her older brother. She immediately put away the oiled paper packet, sat down at Wei Luo's side, and said, "I didn't want to become too full, so I only had half a bowl of jellied tofu and kept the rest of my stomach empty to eat lunch."

As for the remaining half of the bowl... she had naturally given it to Yang Zhen.

Yang Zhen was a bodyguard and normally couldn't eat with them. At this time, he was properly standing at the side.

Because Zhao Jie was present, Zhao Liuli didn't ask him to come over to eat together with them. But, occasionally, she would glance and smile at him when Zhao Jie wasn't paying attention.

Yang Zhen was also look at her. Although he didn't smile, the soft light in his eyes couldn't be concealed.

The four people were pondering and harboring thoughts in their minds during this meal.

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After lunch, Zhao Liuli had to go back to the palace.

Yu He was located in the Western Main Street and was very close to Duke Ying's residence. But, after they sat down in the carriage, Zhao Jie ordered the driver to go back to the palace first before sending Wei Luo back to Duke Ying's residence.

This meant that on the way from the palace to Duke Ying's residence she would be alone with Zhao Jie inside the carriage. She asked, "My home isn't far from here. It's only two streets way... It won't take long to get there. Could you send me back first?"

Zhao Jie was sitting across from here. He raised his eyes to look

at her, "There's a time limit to how long Liuli can leave the palace. She'll be late if we're delayed."

Oh... fine. She was speechless at the moment.

The carriage soon arrived at the palace entrance. Before she left, Zhao Liuli smilingly whispered into her ear, "Ah Luo, your lipstick is gone."

Wei Luo froze for a moment. Stunned, she said, "You..."

These two siblings were both brilliant. Although Zhao Liuli usually behaved foolishly, she understood everything clearly. She knew that the relationship between Wei Luo and Zhao Jie was unusual. She could audaciously guess this because Zhao Jie never refrained from saying anything taboo in front of her. Now, her guess had become reality. It was very possible that before too long, her friend that was like a sister would become her sister-in-law.

In this way, Wei Luo would be even closer with her.

The more she thought, the more she felt good about this. Her movement when she left the carriage was very relaxed.

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However, inside the carriage, Wei Luo wasn't feeling happy.

Her mind kept thinking. How did Liuli know? When did she know? Did Her Majesty also know? The more she thought, the more her thoughts whirled around in confusion and distress.

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The carriage slowly went towards Duke Ying's residence.

Inside the carriage, Wei Luo looked down without saying anything. Zhao Jie also didn't open his mouth. The carriage had a silence that was difficult to endure. A long time later, she finally figured out what she wanted to say after deliberating. She slowly raised her lips and said, "What happened recently... I'll treat it as if nothing happened. Big brother was confused and made a mistake."

She had thought about this a lot, but she had never thought about accepting Zhao Jie.

This had been too sudden. At the moment, she felt confused and wasn't clear what she should be thinking. She only knew that she wanted more time to think.

As Zhao Jie listened to her, he silently looked at her.

The young girl's eyes were bright. This time she didn't avoid looking at him. She confidently looked at him while waiting for his reply.

Unfortunately... a long time later, he lightly said, "Ah Luo, this prince kissed you. You can't pretend that nothing happened."

Her little face froze.

He paused, then he gently continued, "This prince likes you. You can't act as if I don't like you."

# Chapter 74.1

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After returning home, Wei Luo was preoccupied.

She had Jin Lu and Bai Lan prepare hot water, then she took an hour long bath behind the divider screen that was made of twelve red sandalwood pieces and decorated with flowers and birds.

There wasn't any movement behind the divider screen for a long time. Jin Lu and Bai Lan thought that she had fallen asleep. They looked at each other in dismay and could only go inside to look for her. After they entered, they saw that she was lying on the edge of the tub with her pale lotus-like arms outside of the tub and looking straight ahead. She wasn't sleeping. She was clearly lost in her thoughts!

Jin Lu went forward and softly called out, "Miss, are you done bathing?"

She suddenly returned to the present and turned her head around to look. Her little face was full of confusion. Her bright eyes looked around the room as her thick eyelashes fluttered like butterflies beating their wings to fly. She had soaked for too long and didn't notice the water had long become cold until now. She suddenly shivered. She quickly recovered her senses and covered the two small peaches in front of her. "I'm done bathing. Bring my clothes over here. I'm going to put them on."

Jin Lu thought there was something wrong with Wei Luo. As for what was exactly wrong, she couldn't figure it out at the moment. She only nodded and said, "Yes."

Wei Luo stood up from the tub. She was a thirteen-year-old girl and her woman's physique wasn't fully developed yet. At the moment, she was still slightly small and slender. However, she was already in her fledgling state. When she grew up more, she would have an exquisite figure. She put on a thin peach pink top and a beautiful silk skirt. Her wet hair was hanging down on her back

and dampened a large spot on her top. The material had become transparent and stuck to her flesh that was like white jade and created an outline of a willow waist.

Jin Lu came forward and held up her full wet hair that took two hands to hold, "This servant wants to help Miss dry her hair... If its left like this, Miss might get a cold later."

Wei Luo's heart was filled with other thoughts. She didn't nod or refuse as she sat on a sandalwood stool that was in front of a mirror. She held up her cheek in one hand as she continued to think.

Her mind kept echoing the words that Zhao Jie had said in the carriage. He said that he liked her. She still felt that this was unimaginable.

When did he start liking her? She had met him when she was six years old and had called him big brother. She had always acted like an ignorant and naive little girl in front of him. Why did he like her? It couldn't be that he had strange inclinations?

Thinking about it, it wasn't impossible. Otherwise, why did he always treat her so well? When she was a child, he had given her a blood jade and a kitten. He had also easily agreed with bringing her to Long Shou Village. After she had caused such a big mess there, he had been perfectly happy to settle everything for her without first asking for an explanation.

Thinking of this, Wei Luo felt shocked. She suddenly straightened up and bumped into a silver comb on the table.

The silver comb heavily landed on the ground and made a loud sound.

Zhao Jie liked little girls?

Jin Lu was startled by her action. She crouched down to pick up the double-edged comb. Seeing that her appearance continued to look dejected, she couldn't resist attentively asking, "Miss, what's

wrong? You've been ill at ease since you returned. Did something troublesome happen while you were outside?"

Wei Luo pursed her lips. Her confused heart felt as if it was stepping on pins and needles. She wasn't in the mood to answer Jin Lu's question.

However, after she thought about it again, she felt that her earlier thought wasn't correct. Zhao Jie only treated her well. He was cold towards other little girls.

During Zhao Liuli's seventh birthday, there were so many little girls in attendance, but he didn't speak to any of them. He even looked slightly impatient on that day and seemed very hard to get along with. Even Liang Yu Rong, who was usually courageous, was secretly scared of him. But, on that day, behind Xin Yan, he had gently asked her if the kitten had injured her and wanted to give her one of the kittens.

When she was a child, she was the only person that he treated nicely. Now that she had grown up, it was still the same.

When he came back from Binzhou, in front of palace servant girls, he had put on the turquoise squirrel waist accessory for her. And on Zhang Xun Mountain's Jing He Villa, when she had twisted her ankle, he had personally applied medicine for her. Even on Qian Temple's mountainside, he had personally led a horse for her... There had always been a ball of doubts inside Wei Luo's heart. She didn't understand why he only treated her well. Now, she finally understood everything. The clouds had been dispelled and she saw the sun.

After Jin Lu dried Wei Luo's hair and seeing that her Miss was lost in her thoughts again, she couldn't resist sighing. What happened to her Miss today? Her entire self seemed off.

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Wei Luo didn't use too much time to consider this matter. It was

probably because there was a more important matter.

She still hadn't forgotten about meeting Zhao Jue and Xiang Xuan at Yu He. She couldn't let that type of a woman become Liang Yu's concubine, much less enter Marquis Ping Yuan's residence. If she remembered the time correctly, Xiang Xuan and Zhao Jue's affair would soon be exposed. Not much later, Xiang Xuan would fool around with Liang Yu on Marquis Ping Yuan's birthday banquet and take the opportunity to act out a scene of "illicit sexual relations after getting drunk". Then, she would threaten Liang Yu into taking responsibility for her.

There was still one more month until Marquis Ping Yuan's birthday banquet.

Before the birthday banquet, there was still Zhao Liuli's hairpin ceremony to trouble her.

Empress Chen was very concerned about Zhao Liuli's hairpin ceremony. After all, it was a very important ceremony and nothing could go wrong. The hairpin ceremony would even be held at Qing Xi Palace. It would be an extremely grand occasion. On that day, not only were the wives of court officials invited, but many daughters of nobles were also invited to attend Zhao Liuli's coming-of-age ceremony.

During the past several days, Wei Luo went to Qing Xi Palace a few times to learn from Mama Qiu what a zanzhe had to do and to become more familiar with the hairpin ceremony. Fortunately, it wasn't difficult. She was only responsible for putting up Zhao Liuli's hair into a bun and inserting the hairpin. Wei Luo had a clever mind and quickly learned her tasks. Seeing that she had remembered all the steps in the hair arrangement after practicing a few times, Empress Chen felt reassured and greatly praise her.

Today was April 12th and Zhao Liuli's hairpin ceremony.

Before Wei Luo entered the palace, she intentionally went to Marquis Ping Yuan's residence in order to pick up Liang Yu Rong

and to go to palace together in the same carriage.

Inside the carriage, Liang Yu Rong was wearing a short-sleeve lilac top and a white skirt. On her smooth ears, there was a pair of gold and jade earrings that looked like mini lanterns. She looked natural and elegant like a cool breeze underneath a forest tree. She was sitting across from Wei Luo and leaning against a sapphire blue damask silk pillow. She intentionally said in a sour tone, "You looked unwilling to see me the last few times we met. I thought you didn't like me. Why did you make a special trip to my home to look for me today? Is something wrong?"

As Wei Luo listened, she felt a burst of humor and ridiculousness.

The last few times, she had shown an unwilling face in front of her because she didn't want to give her a chance to meet her eldest cousin. She hadn't expected that Yu Rong would be so petty to remember this.

Wei Luo looked at her in annoyance for a moment. She picked up the white porcelain teapot from the small vermillion lacquered table inlaid with gold and carved with spirals, poured a cup of e mei xue ya tea, and delivered it to her, "Tell me, how have I shown that I disliked you? Did I not give you tea or a place to sit?"

She said it wasn't either and after a long time of being unable to say a reason, she gave up on pursuing this question and curiously asked, "Today is Princess Tianji's hairpin ceremony. As the zanzhe, why did you come looking for me instead of going to the palace earlier?"



## Chapter 74.2

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Wei Luo didn't speak in a roundabout way. She went straight to the point by saying, "It'll be Uncle Liang's birthday banquet next month, so I should be preparing a gift. After thinking about it for a while, I still haven't thought of a good gift, so I wanted to directly ask you. Do you know what he likes?"

So, it was for this reason. Liang Yu Rong disappointedly realized. She couldn't immediately think of a good gift. Her big eyes turned as she thought and her eyes finally stopped at the teapot. She clapped her hands and said, "Tea would be good. My father enjoys drinking tea the most. The flavor of this tea is pretty good. If you give him this tea, he would definitely be happy."

Her selection was good. Although it seemed casual, her vision wasn't the slightest bit poor.

This e mei xue ya tea was one of the highest quality green tea. Emperor Chong Zhen had conferred the title of the capital's best tea to this tribute tea. This tea was grown on the peaks of mountains and there wasn't much produced each year. Most of this tea stayed with the emperor and only a little bit was distributed to the court officials. Earlier this year, Duke Ying's residence only received one and a half kilograms of tealeaves. Duke Ying had kept a quarter of a kilogram for himself and distributed the rest among the other branches. Wei Kun knew that Wei Luo loved to drink this tea and generously gave her his entire share. Wei Zheng had been extremely dissatisfied by this.

Wei Luo had only drank this tea a few times this year and still had most of a quarter of a kilogram of tealeaves left. She was reluctant to give the entire amount to Marquis Ping Yuan.

However, since she was the one who first opened her mouth, even if her heart ached, she could only resign herself to parting with her treasure.

After starting the conversation, Wei Luo asked another question, "I heard that your family also invited Prince Rui and his family? Is that true?"

Liang Yu Rong nodded after thinking about it for a moment. "My father wrote out the invitation cards. I didn't see them. But, I heard him talking about it a few times with my mother. He seemed to have mentioned Prince Rui."

Then, she was right.

That day, if Zhao Jue and Xiang Wu were attending, then Xiang Xuan would also naturally be attending.

Wei Luo thought it was necessary to warn Yu Rong, so that Liang Yu wouldn't repeat the same mistake of provoking this restless woman.

She had Liang Yu Rong come closer to her and whisper into her ear, "A few days ago, I went out with Liuli and met two people..."

She went on to describe the situation that had happened in the private room. Of course, she only tactfully said there was something fishy between those two people and not the words she had heard on the other side of the wall. Even if it was only like this, Liang Yu Rong still understood her meaning.

Her eyes were as wide as possible when she incredulously said, "I've seen that Zhao Heir before. He looked so proper. Who could have expected that he would be that type of person...."

While there were examples of two sisters serving one man, it was rare. And, when it happened, it was properly and officially done. What those two were doing was too dirty. Behind the back of his wife, he was fooling around outside with his sister-in-law and it was even a public place... It was unthinkable no matter how one looked at it.

Liang Yu Rong's face clearly showed how she despised this type of vulgar matter.

Wei Luo nodded in agreement and warned her, "I'm telling you this because I want you to be careful of Xiang Xuan... If she can fool around with her own brother-in-law, then she might also fool around with other men. On Uncle Liang's birthday banquet, you have to look after your older brother. Don't let him be tricked by her." To avoid Liang Yu Rong from overthinking, she explained, "Even if it's unlikely, it's better to be safe than sorry."

Liang Yu Rong understood and felt the same way. She nodded, "Don't worry. I'll carefully watch over my older brother. I won't let him have any contact with Xiang Xuan."

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At some point during their conversation, the carriage had passed through the palace gates and stopped at Qing Xi Palace's entrance.

At this time, many people had already arrived at Qing Xi Palace and were gathered inside Zhao Yang Hall.

The women inside the hall were all in the prime of their youth with beautiful, thick hair. They were all dressed up magnificently with brightly colored ornaments. Just as Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong entered the hall, they saw the three most eye-catching young women.

On one side, there was Gao Dan Yang, and Gao Qing Yang. On the other side, there was Li Xiang.

Gao Dan Yang and Gao Qing Yang were Empress Chen's relatives and their father was Duke Zhen, so there were naturally many people around them. They were also first class beauties. Today, one was wearing a robe that looked like rippling water and the other was wearing a robe with the color of tender green leaves. There were brightly colored flowers embroidered everywhere on their sleeves. They had bright eyes and white teeth. Combined with their dignified bearing, they were very eye-catching while standing at the center of the crowd. They looked like two moons with a group of stars revolving around them.

On the other side, Li Xiang was wearing an apricot robe embroidered with a pattern of golden peony. On the top of her hair, she had a lantern-shaped hair ornament made with golden wires. On both sides of her hair, she had a pair of gold and jade hairpins with stylized cicada. The overall effect was very bright and sparkling. She looked glamorously beautiful. As Elder Princess Gao Yang's daughter, she naturally felt this event was beneath her. She had the cold eyes of a bystander and a displeased expression. Her expression didn't improve until Marquis An Ling's Fifth Miss hurriedly praised her for dressing beautifully today after seeing that Li Xiang was unhappy.

In addition to them, Wei Luo saw Xiang Wu and Xiang Xuan standing in front of a silver divider screen. At this time, their relationship hadn't been broken yet. They looked as close as actual sisters.

Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong walked further into the hall. Li Xiang saw her first. Dissatisfied, in sour tone, she deliberately asked, "Why did you also come here? I didn't hear that Her Majesty invited you. Could you have come here without an invitation card?"

It hadn't been announced yet that Wei Luo would be Princess Tianji's zanzhe, so very few people knew.

It was normal that the initiation list didn't have her name. She was part of the ceremony. She would be putting the hairpin into Liuli's hair.

Wei Luo looked at her. Before Wei Luo could speak, Mama Qiu, who was wearing an autumn-color satin robe, came out from the warmed partition of the hall, saluted, and properly said, "Fourth Miss, come. Her Majesty wants you to go to the back of the hall to prepare. The princess's hairpin ceremony will start soon."

Li Xiang's face stiffened and immediately sunk.

Wei Luo nodded. Without even looking at Li Xiang, she said

good-bye to Liang Yu Rong, then she followed Mama Qiu towards the back of the hall.

After going through a *luo di zhao* carved with a hundred birds, passing through a scenic verandah, they arrived at the back of the hall. The back of the hall was livelier than the front of the hall. The palace servants were busy preparing the clothes and hairpins that Zhao Liuli would soon be wearing. Every piece had to be perfect. They couldn't have any flaws. Other than the palace servants, Empress Chen and her sister, Duke Zhen's wife, was also there. Seeing that Wei Luo had come here, they called her forward to their side to say a few words.

Recalling everything that Wei Luo had done, Empress Chen said with gratification, "Good child, you've been working hard these past few days."

Not much later, a red robed servant girl saluted and brought clothing for Wei Luo, "Her Majesty had ordered us to custom make this clothing for Fourth Miss. Please change into this."

Wei Luo took the clothing. It was a cherry red palace robe with a pink layer beneath. Both the collar and sleeves had finely stitched golden embroidery. The clothing was gorgeous and dignified.

She listened to the servant girl and went behind a divider screen with a landscape painting and ivory carvings. She put the palace robe down on furniture that had curved legs, then she lowered her head to untie the colorful decorative ribbon sash on her waist. As she was about to untie the sash, she suddenly heard the slight sound of footsteps. She stiffened in surprise. Just as she was about to turn around, a pair of hands came out from behind her and pressed down on her hands.

A tall body pressed against hers. It was clearly a man!

In astonishment, Wei Luo opened her eyes wider. As she was about to call out for help, the man was one step faster than her and blocked her mouth. He leaned over and as if he was placating a

startled baby animal, he quietly whispered into her ear, “Hush. Don't move. This prince only wants to say a few words to you.”

# Chapter 75

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Hearing this familiar voice, Wei Luo mentally relaxed. Although she was still suspicious, she wasn't panicking like before.

She knew that Zhao Jie wouldn't hurt her. In addition, this place was Zhao Yang Hall. Empress Chen and Duke Zhen's wife were right outside the divider screen. Even he wouldn't dare to anything to her here. But, why did he appear here? What did he want to say to her? Wei Luo blinked, twisted her head to move his hand away, and turned to look at him. Seeing that it was indeed Zhao Jie, she couldn't help frowning before whispering, "Older brother Prince Jing, why are you here? Is this something that you can't say in normal way?"

While she was saying this, she broke away from him arms and escaped from his embrace. This wasn't some other place. If someone saw them, it wouldn't be good for either of their reputation.

Zhao Jie was wearing a light silk, navy blue robe with a pattern of hornless dragons with a green and purple waist accessory. Standing so straight in front of her, he seemed majestically tall as if his height was seven feet and his demeanor was elegant as red clouds on moonlit night. He didn't stop her from burrowing out of his embrace this time. He was probably apprehensive of this situation too. He had only lightly hugged her for a moment to console himself. He had bitterly missed her the past several days. Now, while looking at her, he curved his lips into a smile and said, "If I tried to speak to you in a normal way, would you pay attention to me?"

Wei Luo choked back her words. She was suddenly speechless.

He was right. She wouldn't have paid attention to him.

During the past several days when she came to Zhao Yang Hall to learn from Mama Qiu the sequence of processes for the hairpin

ceremony, Zhao Jie would also occasionally come to Zhao Yang Hall. At those times, she would stand close to Her Majesty's side and treated him politely while maintaining her distance from him. There were many times where he tried to speak privately with her, but she kept pretending to not know. If she wasn't accompanying Empress Chen, she would be at Mama Qiu's side. It went to the point that when he later looked at her, his gaze would be off. As for what was wrong with his gaze... After she thought about it, his gaze was exactly like third elder cousin Wei Chang Xian's hua tiao dog's gaze when it wasn't allowed to eat meat...

She had avoided him for so many days. Now, she finally couldn't avoid anymore.

Zhao Jie didn't let the slightest change on her face slip away from his notice. The little girl probably had the same thoughts as him. She tried a few times to stammer out a reply, but she couldn't say anything in the end.

He knew that she was still young. It was okay if she still felt confused and wasn't sure right now. Originally, he hadn't wanted her to know so earlier. It could only be blamed by her waking up too soon that day. Now, she knew the things that shouldn't be known. She avoided him and he could only come closer step by step. Otherwise, she would run far away if he weren't careful.

Zhao Jie took something out of his sleeve. It was a golden butterfly and plum blossom hairpin. The hairpin was exceptionally exquisite. On the top, there was two vivid and lifelike golden butterflies with fluttering wings. Their wings were decorated with eight tiny rubies. There were plum blossoms tied to the complicated arrangement of silver webbing hanging from the butterflies. A glance would show that it wasn't an ordinary hairpin. Who knew how much money had to be spent to create it?

This hairpin was similar to the hairpin that Zhao Liuli would be wearing for her hairpin ceremony. The only differences was that this one also had sapphires, the plum blossoms' petals were more



exquisite, and there was even greenery to set off the flowers. Wei Luo raised her head to look at him, "Why does older brother Prince Jing have this?"

He stepped forward and gently inserted the hairpin to side of her hair bun. The butterfly hairpin was elaborate and exceptionally beautiful. It looked really good against her small, white jade face. "This prince ordered the creation of two hairpins from a place outside the place. One was a gift for Liuli. I kept the other one to give to you."

Wei Luo was inevitably stunned. Let's not mention whether or not it was appropriate for him to give her a hairpin. A glance would show that this hairpin was more exquisite than Liuli's hairpin. Yet, he gave this one to her. Was it really okay for him to be so obvious in bias?

She asked, "Did you only come here to give me a hairpin?"

He raised his eyebrows and held back his laughter, "What else could it be?" After saying this, he saw that the little girl's face was slightly strange and couldn't resist teasing her, "This prince has been looking for an opportunity to give you this hairpin during the past several days. Unfortunately, you kept avoiding me, so I didn't have the chance and could only hide here to wait and come out while you were changing your clothes."

Wei Luo's cheeks were slightly red. Possibly, it was because he had mentioned changing clothes, or perhaps it was because he had said she was avoiding him. She lifted her hand to take out the hairpin, pursed her lips, and said, "Older brother Prince Jing, why did you give me this? I don't want it. You should take it back."

He grasped her slender wrist and leaned over to directly face her eyes and nose with his. "Why don't you want it?"

With the conviction that justice was on her side, she boldly said, "A reward should only be given if it's deserved."

Zhao Jie silently laughed. He bumped into her nose and said, "How are you undeserving? Haven't you been coming to the palace for Liuli during the past several days? Isn't that work?"

After she thought about it, she was still unwilling to accept, "Still, that's between me and Liuli. The relationship between this and you..."

How was this related to him?

Zhao Jie interrupted her words, "This prince is Liuli's older brother. It's only naturally that I thank you on her behalf."

Fine... she could reluctantly accept his reasoning. She wouldn't continue to bicker with him over this. Wei Luo struggled with his grip on her wrist, "Then let go of me..."

While they were speaking, the palace servant girl, who had been waiting behind the divider screen for a long time and seeing that Wei Luo hadn't come out yet, couldn't resist going towards the divider screen and calling out, "House Wei's Fourth Miss, are you done changing clothes yet? Her Majesty is waiting for you."

Wei Luo immediately stopped speaking. Her large, almond eyes looked at Zhao Jie. She pursed her pink lips and gestured for him to quickly leave.

However, instead of leaving, he leaned over and touched her lips with his for a moment. He slightly loosened his hold on her wrist. He thought that the little girl's surprised expression that showed she was angry but scared of making a sound was the pinnacle of cuteness. He couldn't resist lowering his head to bite and suck her small lips for a few moments. He seemed like he hadn't fully expressed himself and wished to continue.

Didn't he say that he only wanted to talk to her? Why was he kissing her?

Wei Luo's scrunched up her eyebrows. Just as she was preparing to open her mouth to bite him, he stood up and let go of her.

On the other side of the divider screen, there was the sound of footsteps. It seemed as if there was more than one person. The servant girl's voice started speaking, but it wasn't directed towards Wei Luo, "Greetings to Your Majesty."

Empress Chen had come over here with Duke Zhen's wife. She asked, "Is Ah Luo still not done changing? This empress sees that it's already been a while."

The servant girl shook her head, "This servant just asked. House Wei's Fourth Miss didn't reply. She probably hasn't finished changing yet."

From listening to her words, Empress Chen realized that only Wei Luo was inside. She couldn't resist glancing at the servant girl and asking in dissatisfaction, "Why didn't you go inside to help her? Does it look good for you to stay out here?"

Seeing that she was angry, the servant girl hurriedly kneeled down to admit fault, "This servant was negligent. This servant will immediately go inside to help Miss Wei."

Empress Chen waved her hand and said, "Never mind, this empress will personally go there to look."

Then, she started walking towards the other side of the divider screen.

# Chapter 76.1

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Behind the divider screen with the landscape painting, the little girl had finished changing her clothing. Instead of looking excessively grand, the cherry red palace robe with a pink layer beneath seemed to be very complementary with the girl that was wearing it. She had a naturally beautiful appearance and could afford to wear clothes with such grandeur. Empress Chen had originally been worried that this clothing wouldn't be suitable for her. But now, seeing Wei Luo wearing this robe, her heart immediately dropped to her stomach.

Wei Luo was holding a creamy white, pure silk wrap and was currently wrapping it around her arms. She raised head and saw that Empress Chen and Duke Zhen's wife had come here together. She hurriedly saluted and said, "Greetings Your Majesty..."

(T/N: On the third cover of ChongFei Manual, the artist used green with a white flower pattern instead of the creamy white that's described in the novel for the wrap.)

Empress Chen stepped forward to hold her arms, allowed her to stand up from saluting, carefully looked her up and down in satisfaction, then she smilingly said, "You took so long to change your clothes that this empress thought these clothes didn't fit you. From what I see now, I was thinking too much. Doesn't this look quite good?"

The palace clothing had vividly, bright colors and was mired in enchantingly elaborate embroidery. The clothing made the young girl seem even more beautifully bright. She looked like an overly elaborate doll that had been repeatedly polished. She was absolutely exquisite.

Even Duke Zhen's wife couldn't resist looking at her a few extra times and praising, "Wei-shi is truly a beauty."

Wei Luo's face showed her embarrassment. She secretly clutched

the golden butterfly hairpin that was hidden in her sleeve. She guiltily said, "I made Your Majesty wait too long. It took me a while to tie the waist accessory..."

Empress Chen wasn't in a hurry. She was only worried that Wei Luo had met something troublesome. Seeing that was she perfectly all right, she felt reassured as she said, "It's fine. You don't need to hurry with changing your clothes. This empress will wait for you outside."

Wei Luo nodded in acceptance. She didn't let out a sigh in relief until Empress Chen and Duke Zhen's wife left. When she had heard their footsteps before, she almost cried out in fear. Fortunately, she had enough time to hastily change her clothes after Zhao Jie left and before Empress Chen came.

She had subconsciously hidden the hairpin that Zhao Jie gave her into her sleeve. She didn't want other people to know. This hairpin was too similar to the one that he had given Zhao Liuli. It wouldn't be difficult for other people to guess that he had also given her this hairpin. She was an unmarried girl. She won't even mention the other issues. Just wearing something a man gave her wouldn't be good for her reputation.

Thinking about this matter with Zhao Jie... She couldn't help thinking about Song Hui.

Regardless of her relationship with Zhao Jie, her engagement with Song Hui should be broken. She didn't like Song Hui and wasn't willing to marry him. It wouldn't be okay to keep dragging this out. After all, from the time she was reborn, she hadn't want to be his wife. After several years of interactions with him, she didn't have any more bias against him. He had sincerely treated her well. Regardless of his reason for getting engaged with Wei Zheng in her previous life, he had concentrated his thoughts and efforts on being her older brother Song Hui in this life. Unfortunately, she still didn't have romantic feelings towards him. No matter how well he treated her, it didn't move her heart.

While letting her imagination run wild, she lifted up the silk wrap and walked out from behind the divider screen.

After being recently reprimanded by Empress Chen, the servant girl outside the divider screen didn't dare to be even slightly negligent. She respectfully led Wei Luo towards the Chinese cedar dressing table outlined in gold to sit down, then she brushed her hair out from her original hairstyle. In a short period of time, she coiled Wei Luo's hair into a shuang huan wang xian hairstyle and inserted golden hairpins with flowers and jade hairpins with stylized cicadas and small birds into her hair. She wasn't finished with Wei Luo until she did the last step of putting on a pair of golden lantern earrings.

Just as Wei Luo was about stand up, Zhao Liuli's personal servant girl, Yun Zi, came over to say, "Miss Wei, Her Highness is requesting you go to warm room where she is."

Wei Luo tilted her head and asked, "Did she say why?"

Yin Zi shook her head.

She put down the double-edged fine-toothed comb and followed Yun Zi towards the warm room.

Zhao Liuli had recently taken a bath. At the moment, she had a lotus colored gown draped over her and she was sitting on the couch with red eyes. She wouldn't let anyone near her. It seemed as if she was sulking.

After Wei Luo stepped forward and asked, she learned that Liuli was having a disagreement with Yang Zhen. It wasn't a big matter. Today was Liuli's fifteenth birthday and she only had one request. She wanted Yang Zhen to stay at her side. But, that block of wood had disappeared this morning and didn't come back until now. When he came back, he didn't say a single word to her before turning around to do something else.

What could he be busy with? Wasn't his most important task to

protect her?

Zhao Liuli puffed out her cheeks as she said, "... so I'm angry."

Wei Luo didn't know whether she should laugh or cry. At this time, the hairpin ceremony would soon start. How could she still have the energy to be angry? She could only try to coax Liuli into obediently changing her clothes, having her hair arranged, and waiting until after the hairpin ceremony to find Yang Zhen. She could be properly angry with him then.

After Wei Luo spent a lot of effort talking and Liuli was finished complaining, Liuli didn't hold onto her small temper. Fortunately, Liuli wasn't an unreasonable little girl. Even though Liuli wasn't happy, she started to earnestly change into her clothes.

## Chapter 76.2

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Wei Luo left the warm room, past a turn in the corner, and coincidentally heard two voices ahead of them. It was Empress Chen talking to someone.

Empress Chen called the other person Wen-shi. Wei Luo thought about it. The only person that came here and had this name was Duke Ding's wife, Wen Xing.

Why were they talking here? Was there something urgent?

Wei Luo subconsciously paused and only heard Empress Chen say, "If this empress remembered correctly, the Third Young Master in your family is eighteen years old this year..."

In a respectful and modest tone, Wei-shi said, "Yes, Your Majesty remembered correctly. Xun-er turned eighteen earlier this year."

Empress Chen slowly said, "En, I remember that Xun-er was an amiable, courteous, cheerful, open-minded, and talented person. There are probably many girls who like him?"

Wen-shi lightly laughed and frankly said, "I'm not afraid that Your Majesty will laugh. Xun-er is very eccentric and doesn't like to talk with girls. Even now, he's not engaged."

Empress Chen said in puzzlement, "Oh. This Empress remembers that he was a lively child. He even came to Zhao Yang Hall several times and played along well with Liuli back then. How did he become eccentric?"

Wen-shi said, "Your Majesty, you don't know..."

Wei Luo didn't hear the rest of her words. She turned around to take another path to leave the back of the hall.

The meaning of Empress Chen's previous words was already clear enough. Zhao Liuli had reached the marriageable age. At the longest, she would be married within a year or two. At the



moment, Empress Chen didn't know about Liuli's relationship with Yang Zhen. If she knew, then no matter what, she wouldn't be willing for her precious daughter to marry a bodyguard. Empress Chen had only mentioned Third Young Master Gao Cong Xun. But, she would probably be planning their wedding soon...

Even if it wasn't Gao Cong Xun, it would still be a young master from a noble family.

She didn't know what the ending for Zhao Liuli and Yang Zhen would be.

Wei Luo walked closer to the back of the hall. As she was thinking about her worries, Li Xiang coincidentally came out from inside. The two of them met at the doorway. Li Xiang slanted her head to look at her with a provocative gaze that seemed as if she was rejoicing in someone's misfortune.

Wei Luo furrowed her eyebrows. She didn't know why Li Xiang was here. Shouldn't she be at the front of the hall? However, she didn't have the time to think too much about this. A servant girl came by with a red sandalwood box that had a plum blossom pattern and brought it over to her.

The servant girl said, "Miss Wei, the hairpin ceremony has already started. Please go to the front of the hall."

Wei Luo nodded and accepted the box.

The box contained the hairpin that Zhao Liuli would be using in the hairpin ceremony. It was a golden butterfly hairpin that was similar to the one that Zhao Jie had given her. She had already seen it several times, so she walked directly to the front of the hall without opening the box to look inside.

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Inside Zhao Yang Hall, Empress Chen was standing in front of an eight treasure style couch with colorful glass. Zhao Liuli was wearing her selected robe and standing below her. On the sides,

there were noble married women and their daughters that were attending the ceremony.

Zhao Liuli was kneeling on red suede carpet and saluting Empress Chen with her hands together.

There were two steps to the hairpin ceremony. The girl's hair would be gathered up onto the top of her head into a bun, then the hairpin would be inserted into her hair. Wei Luo was standing on the side and waiting for Zhao Liuli's hair to be put into a bun, so that she could insert the hairpin. Who could have imagined that when she opened the box there was a butterfly missing on the hairpin?! Instead of two butterflies, there was only a lonely butterfly left on the hairpin. This greatly reduced the value of the hairpin.

Where was the other butterfly?

When she saw the hairpin yesterday, it had been fine. Today, it had been in a box all day. No one had touched it. How could a butterfly be missing? This hairpin definitely couldn't be put onto Zhao Liuli's head. Empress Chen placed such a huge importance on the hairpin ceremony and would be able to see there was something wrong with it in a single glance. If she messed up, she would humiliate the imperial family and Empress Chen would be extremely unhappy with her.

If this wasn't an accident, who would intentionally try to harm her?

Wei Luo thought about when she met Li Xiang at the back of the hall's doorway. Then, she lifted up her eyes to look at Li Xiang.

She saw that Li Xiang was looking at her with a smile. She seemed as if she was going to be watching a good show soon.

Wei Luo dropped her eyes. She had already guessed what happened.

The first step was almost complete. They would soon be waiting

for her to step forward to insert the hairpin into Zhao Liuli's hair. Mama Qiu tilted her head to gesture. Wei Luo settled her mind, raised her head, and without a change in her expression, she took out the hairpin that Zhao Jie gave from her sleeve and used it to replace the hairpin inside the box. Fortunately, the area she was standing in wasn't conspicuous. No one noticed what she had just done.

Wei Luo stepped forward. First, she saluted Empress Chen, then she stood up, half-kneeled in front of Zhao Liuli, took out the golden butterfly hairpin from the box that was lined with red silk, and inserted the hairpin into Zhao Liuli's hair.

Zhao Liuli saw the hairpin, immediately opened her eyes wider from surprise, and whispered, "Ah Luo..."

Wei Luo quietly said, "Shh." Then, she stood up and walked back to her original place.

That hairpin was almost exactly the same as Zhao Liuli's hairpin with only a few subtle differences. Empress Chen was standing on a higher level. If she weren't carefully looking, she naturally wouldn't be able to tell.

When Wei Luo walked back to her spot, she met Li Xiang's gaze. As expected, there was an incredulous expression on Li Xiang's face. While Li Xiang was angry, she didn't dare to stare at Wei Luo. She probably wouldn't be able to guess how Wei Luo was able to produce an identical hairpin.

After the hairpin ceremony was over, Wei Luo returned to the back of the hall to ask the palace servants if they saw anyone touching this box. She saw Zhao Jie standing inside the entrance. His dark eyes were looking at her. He seemed to have been waiting for a long time.

Wei Luo paused in walking, but she eventually walked over to him.

He looked at red sandalwood box in her hand, then he looked at her. He went straight to the point by asking, "Why did you put the hairpin that this prince gave you into Liuli's hair?"

As expected, he was waiting here for her because he had found out. Was he demanding an explanation of her version of the events?

Wei Luo didn't want him to misunderstand. She could only open the box to let him see the hairpin inside. "I don't know who broke Liuli's hairpin. It's missing a butterfly. If I didn't use that one as a replacement, Empress Chen would have definitely been mad."

The author has something to say:

Zhao Jie: I don't care. If I give you something, then it's yours! If someone breaks it, then this prince will break that person!

Li Xiang silently shakes in a corner.

# Chapter 77.1

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The hairpin was lying on red silk. It was clear that someone had intentionally broken off one of the two butterflies off instead of the butterfly accidentally breaking off.

Zhao Jie's face sunk, then he asked, "Who broke it?"

Wei Luo paused. Soon after, she shook her head and said she didn't know. Originally, she had wanted to mention Li Xiang. But, after she thought about it, it wouldn't be good to rashly accuse her without evidence. What if someone asked her for evidence? Wouldn't it be too careless to say it was only her instinct? She had to find conclusive evidence first so that Li Xiang wouldn't have room to refute.

Zhao Jie entered the hall with her, called all of the palace eunuchs and servant girls that had been serving in the back of hall to come forward, and flung the box at them. With a foreboding face, he asked, "What happened with this?"

None of the palace eunuchs and servant girls knew what happened. They looked at each other in dismay. They thought an error had been made with Princess Tianji's hairpin ceremony. One by one, they threw themselves onto the floor to plead for mercy, "This servant is ignorant.. Your Highness Prince Jing, please investigate..."

His cold face didn't become even slightly milder. Instead, it became even colder. "You can't even properly watch over a hairpin. What's the use in keeping you?"

Hearing this, everyone cried out they were wrongly accused and repeatedly pressed their foreheads against the ground while begging for mercy.

This method of asking wouldn't work. They couldn't all be killed to vent Zhao Jie's anger. If this happened, Zhao Jie wouldn't find

the culprit and Li Xiang would be let off from being punished.

After Wei Luo thought for a moment, she called forward the servant girl that had given her box, "During the short time I was gone, did anyone else touch this box or come to the back of the hall?"

Seeing the opportunity to escape death, the servant girl seriously went through her memory and honestly said, "I didn't see anyone touching the box... But Prince Ru Yang's daughter and Duke Zhen's second daughter had come by here."

Li Xiang and Gao Qing Yang... Gao Qing Yang didn't have any enmity with her. She probably wouldn't deliberate harm her. It was different with Li Xiang. Li Xiang would love if it she made a fool of herself and was punished by Empress Chen.

Unfortunately for Li Xiang, she could have never expected that Zhao Jie would give her an almost identical hairpin.

Thinking about that hairpin, Wei Luo felt somewhat reluctant in her heart. She won't mention the other factors. Just the appearance of the hairpin was enough for her to like it. It was really beautiful...

If Li Xiang was really the culprit, she definitely couldn't let her get away with this.

After Wei Luo pondered over this, she decided that she would personally solve this problem. She didn't want Zhao Jie to interfere. Zhao Jie was a man. The battlefield and officialdom were the areas where he exerted his control. If he became involved in a conflict between women, then it would be too petty. Beside, she had already thought of a method for Li Xiang to pick up the stone that would crush her own feet. Since Li Xiang dared to try to secretly harm her, then she should be prepared to face retaliation.

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After the hairpin ceremony was over, Zhao Liuli asked a servant

girl where Wei Luo went and hastily came to the back of the hall. She had already taken off the golden butterfly and plum blossom hairpin. As she personally gave it back to Wei Luo, she rebuked, "Ah Luo, did you think I wouldn't know? This isn't my hairpin. This is the one my older brother gave you..."

They were standing behind a rosewood screen divider inlaid with natural ivory and speaking with low voices, so they weren't worried about being overheard.

Wei Luo's face showed her astonishment.

During the hairpin ceremony, she knew that Liuli had recognized this hairpin. But, she hadn't expected that Liuli would return it. She had already prepared herself for the loss!

Seeing that Wei Luo wasn't taking the hairpin, Liuli held her hand and earnestly put the hairpin into her hand. Liuli glanced at Zhao Jie, then in an ambiguous tone, she whispered into Wei Luo's ear, "I don't know about anything else, but I know that my older brother had ordered people to make two of these hairpins. One was for me and the one was for you. Yours is much more exquisite than mine. Even though I think my older brother is being bias, I can't take your things."

In addition, Wei Luo was her best friend. She wouldn't bicker with her over this!

After saying this, she stretched out her hand, and asked with a smile, "I returned your hairpin. Where's mine?"

Wei Luo didn't hide from her. She took the hairpin out from the box and frankly said, "Someone broke your hairpin... At that time, I didn't have another way, so I replaced it with that one."

Startled, Zhao Liuli took the hairpin and looked at it closer. "Why is it missing a butterfly? Was it dropped and got broken off?"

Wei Luo shook her head, "It wasn't dropped..." After a pause, she slowly said, "If I guessed correctly, someone was deliberately

trying to harm me."

Zhao Liuli widened her eyes, "What?"

Liuli wasn't stupid. After seriously thinking about it, she quickly understood what had happened. She hurriedly asked, "Ah Luo, who wanted to harm you?"

Wei Luo said, "I have a suspect in mind, but I'm not sure yet if its her."

After saying this, she leaned closer to Liuli and whispered something. Other than the two of them, no one else knew what she said.

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On the other side of the Zhao Yang Hall, after the hairpin ceremony was over, the noble women bid Empress Chen good-bye. One by one, they left Zhao Yang Hall and exited the palace.

Gao Dan Yang hadn't left yet. She had Gao Qing Yang leave first while she stayed with Empress Chen so they could talk for a while. Gao Qing Yang didn't have any objections and started leaving the hall. Coincidentally, she was walking behind Li Xiang. One after another, they left Zhao Yang Hall's main doors. While they were walking in the spacious verandah, Gao Qing Yang looked at the person in front of her and suddenly called out, "Li Xiang."

Li Xiang didn't have a very good relationship with her. Hearing her voice, she reluctantly stopped, turned her head, and asked, "Does Duke Zhen's Second Miss have something to say?"

Li Xiang disliked Gao Qing Yang and Gao Dan Yang. She believed that she was more beautiful than those two, but in all respects, those two stood in limelight more than her. Every time there was a large banquet, everyone would revolve around these two siblings. What was so great about them? Wasn't it only because Empress Chen was their maternal aunt?

Her mother was the elder princess. Her status was much more



noble than theirs!

Gao Qing Yang didn't say anything until the people around them left. Then, she walked closer to Li Xiang. She smiled as she said, "Of course, there's something. If I didn't, why would I talk to you?"

Li Xiang looked at her in askance, "What?"

## Chapter 77.2

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Gao Qing Yang meaningfully looked at her left hand and said, "You've been clenching that hand since the beginning of the hairpin ceremony and haven't loosen your hand even now. What treasure is hidden inside? How about letting me see?"

Li Xiang pursed her lips. Reluctant to admit a mistake, she said, "What does this have to do with you?"

"Of course it has nothing to do with me." Gao Qing Yang lightly laughed and continued saying, "But it's probably related to Princess Tianji and Duke Ying's family's Fourth Miss. You've been holding that butterfly for so long. Doesn't it feel unbearably painful?"

Li Xiang's face paled. She looked at her in shock.

How did she know? Did she see something?

She thought her action had been absolutely safe. Who could have imaged that Gao Qing Yang had clearly seen everything? Gao Qing Yang had gone to the back of the hall to look for Empress Chen, but Empress Chen wasn't there, so she didn't stay there for long and started walking back. When she was leaving, she saw Li Xiang entering. With a doubtful heart, she stayed at the doorway to carefully pay attention.

From this view, she naturally saw and stored away the memory of Li Xiang's actions.

Li Xiang had taken out the golden butterfly hairpin from the box. Not long after, she put the hairpin back inside. She didn't even have to think to know what Li Xiang had done and the reason for it. This hairpin was primarily Wei Luo's responsibility. If something happened, Wei Luo wouldn't be able to escape punishment.

What deep hatred did she have towards Wei Luo? Otherwise,

why would she do something so vicious?

Gao Qing Yang didn't have much of an impression of Wei Luo. They had only met once when they were children. It had been Zhao Liuli's seventh birthday at Xin Yan. She had originally been eating peanuts, but unfortunately, Wei Luo grabbed a bunch of peanuts and there soon wasn't enough. She had been very angry at the time and started arguing with her. Later, Wei Luo's younger brother had appeared and the matter had ended.

Now, many years had passed. She had already forgotten the inconsequential things from childhood. She didn't have any enmity or goodwill towards Wei Luo.

It was only that she couldn't stand Li Xiang's behavior.

Li Xiang heard her words, but wouldn't admit. She smoothed out her expression and flatly denied, "What butterfly? I don't understand what you're saying."

Gao Qing Yang pursed her lips and faintly smiled. "You really don't understand? Then, do you dare to open your hand for me to see what's inside?"

Of course, Li Xiang didn't dare.

She directly looked at Gao Qing Yang for a moment, then she pursed her lips and flew into a rage from the humiliation, "Why should I let you see? It can't be that just because you said I took it, it means that I took it. Why do I have to listen to you?!"

She immediately turned around and stormed away.

She walked quickly. Although she looked calm, she was internally completely panicking.

Gao Qing Yang knew. Would she tell Empress Chen? What would happen if Empress Chen knew and found the butterfly on her body? It would be better for her to find a place to throw away this butterfly. Once this was done, everything would be resolved. However, there were eyes everywhere in the palace. She would

leave behind a trace no matter where she went.

Maybe she should put it back in the box?

She felt confused as she thought about the hairpin that Wei Luo had recently inserted into Liuli's hair. She had personally broken that hairpin. How was it possible for Wei Luo to have taken out an intact hairpin?

She thought about it for a long time, but still wasn't able to figure it out. At this time, two palace servant girls passed by her. As they walked, they quietly talked.

"The hairpin that His Highness Prince Jing gave the princess was so pretty. I heard that it took a month for it to be made..."

"Yeah, even the Her Majesty was very pleased with this hairpin and praised Prince Jing for being so thoughtful."

Li Xiang subconsciously stopped walking to hear their conversation better.

As the two servant girls walked farther away, one of them said, "That hairpin was placed at the back of the hall. I recently went there to take a look. I didn't expect that it would look even better up close. There wasn't the slightest flaw..."

Li Xiang stood in place. She felt incredulous.

How could there be no flaw? She had clearly broken off one of the butterflies and that butterfly was in her hand right now. It couldn't be that this was her misperception, right?

She couldn't believe it. She took out the butterfly from her hand to look. It was still there. She wasn't hallucinating. Since this was true, how come no one could see the truth? How was Wei Luo able to take out an intact hairpin?

She found this hard to believe. She didn't know if there were problems with other people's eyes, or if there was something wrong with her eyes. After thinking about it for a long time, she

still couldn't figure it out. In the end, she decided to go to the back of the hall to look.

At this time, there weren't many people at the back of the hall. There were only a few palace servant girls left to clean up the aftermath from today. Seeing that she had come, the servant girls saluted and didn't ask much before going back to cleaning.

Li Xiang walked further inside. On the Chinese cedar dressing table outlined in gold, there was a rosewood box with a plum flower design that had contained Zhao Liuli's hairpin today. They probably didn't have time to put it away yet. Hairpins and other hair accessories used for the hairpin ceremony today surrounded the box. She looked around the room. Seeing that no one was paying attention to her, she walked forward, and opened the box.

After she clearly saw what was inside, her eyes opened wider in astonishment.

Inside the box, it was the golden butterfly hairpin that she had damaged! It wasn't flawlessly perfect like the palace servant girls had described. Then, what had Wei Luo inserted into Zhao Liuli's hair? Had she seen wrong?

After her surprise, she suddenly realized there was something wrong. She had fallen into a trap! Just as she was closing the box, she heard a voice from behind her ask, "Li Xiang, what are you doing?"

Flustered and dismayed, she turned around and saw Empress Chen gracefully standing across from her. At her side, there was Zhao Liuli, Wei Luo, and Gao Dan Yang.

Li Xiang's heart dropped. Her brain quickly tried to think of an excuse she could use to explain.

Before she had time to open her mouth, Zhao Liuli looked at her and asked, "Why were you looking at the box with the hairpin? What are you holding in your hand? Can I see?"

# Chapter 78.1

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Li Xiang subconsciously hid her hand into her sleeve and clenched her hand tighter.

She hadn't seen anyone in the room when she entered, but now they had all appeared. It wasn't difficult to guess that this had been a trap. She clenched her teeth and looked at Wei Luo, who was next to Zhao Liuli. Wei Luo's hands were behind her back and her smiling pink lips seemed to be laughing at her.

She shouldn't have come back... No matter how much doubt she had in her heart, she shouldn't have come back!

At this point, it was too late to have these thoughts. A servant girl behind Zhao Liuli carried the rosewood box with a plum flower design to Empress Chen and mumbled, "Your Majesty, the princess's hairpin is missing a butterfly..."

Empress Chen looked down to see the situation inside the box.

Empress Chen had originally been talking with Gao Dan Yang at Zhao Yang Hall when Zhao Liuli suddenly said she was unsatisfied about a minor detail for the golden butterfly hairpin and pestered her into coming here to look. She didn't have any choice other than accompanying Zhao Liuli here. Unexpectedly, she saw this scene when she came here. Empress Chen wasn't a fool. She knew that her daughter had deliberately lied to get her to come here, but she didn't reveal this. Her daughter must have a reason for doing this. She took advantage of the situation to look at Li Xiang and see what she would say.

Knowing that she couldn't escape from this disaster, Li Xiang hurriedly knelt and opened her hand to reveal the golden butterfly inside. She tried to avoid taking responsibility for her action. Afraid of acknowledging her error, she said, "Jiumu (maternal uncle's wife), please calm down... I saw how beautiful this hairpin was and couldn't resist playing with it. I didn't expect

that it would be so fragile. I only gently touched it and a butterfly fell off..."

Then, she raised her small, white jade face and helplessly said, "I know that this is older cousin Liuli's adulthood ceremony's hairpin and has exceptional significance. It's entirely my fault for liking to play too much... Where was older cousin's hairpin made? Will it be okay if I compensate you with an identical one?"

She had deliberately called Empress Chen jiumu and Zhao Liuli older cousin, so that Empress Chen might only lightly punish her for Elder Princess Gao Yang's sake. But, she had thought too simply. Empress Chen dearly loved Zhao Liuli. How could she tolerate anyone acting against her? Empress Chen's face immediately became severe and mercilessly said, "Since you know that this hairpin has exceptional significance, how will you be able to compensate with an identical one? How does Zhao Xuan usually teach you? Do you think it's okay to casually touch other people's things?"

(T/N: Just in case it's too long ago, Elder Princess Gao Yang's name is Zhao Xuan.)

Li Xiang pursed her lips and her eyes showed her humiliation. She hadn't expected that Empress Chen would scold her and even her mother in front of so many people...

Empress Chen and Elder Princess Gao Yang had never gotten along, so Empress Chen had never been close with her two children, Li Xiang and Li Song. In addition, Prince Ru Yang's heir was Zhao Zhang's henchman. Empress Chen's relationship with Prince Ru Yang's family had become worse and worse.

Before Empress Chen had married Emperor Chong Zhen, Elder Princess Gao Yang hadn't approved of her older brother marrying her. They had secretly been very competitive with each other. During the past years, they had only slowly stopped after growing older. Empress Chen had always disliked Elder Princess Gao Yang.

Now, Li Xiang had landed in her hand from breaking Zhao Liuli's hairpin. How could it be possible for her to be amiable?

Li Xiang bit her lower lip, looked up, and said, "This was my fault. It's not related to my mother. Jiumu, please don't blame this on my mother..." Then, she looked at Zhao Liuli and mulled over her words several times before saying, "Older cousin Liuli, it was my fault. I broke your hairpin. Please be magnanimous as my superior. Don't act like me and fuss over this."

As Li Xiang said this, she clenched the fist that was inside her sleeve. She had always been in a high position and behaved overbearing to others. She never had to grovel and beg for mercy.

And she had done this in front of Wei Luo!

She didn't have to look to know the current expression on Wei Luo's face.

If she didn't have to beg Empress Chen to forgive her, she would never lower her head in front of Wei Luo.

The more she thought about it, the angrier that Li Xiang became. Everything must have been schemed by Wei Luo. She had deliberately lured her here so that she would be readily caught. She was truly despicable and shameless...

Zhao Liuli didn't say whether or not she forgave her. She took the hairpin that Yun Zi handed over, brought it closer to look, sucked her lips in, and very regretfully said, "It's broken like this. It definitely can't be fixed... I really like this hairpin..."

Li Xiang pursed her lips tighter.

At the side, Gao Dan Yang naturally also saw the raised hairpin. She made a noise in surprise and pointed at the part where the butterfly was broken off. "It doesn't look like it had broken off from falling. It seems more like someone had torn it off..."

Hearing this, Empress Chen deeply looked at Li Xiang.



Li Xiang hurriedly lowered her head and defended herself. "I won't hide this from jiumu. I didn't have a good hold of it before and accidentally knocked it against the mirror. That's how it broke. I definitely didn't have any intention of damaging older cousin Liuli's stuff."

Empress Chen stayed silent before slowly asking, "Was it really not intentional? This empress remembers that you don't like to play with Liuli. Why did you suddenly have an interest with her stuff? If you only wanted to look, Liuli would have shown it to you. Why did you sneakily come here to look?"

These words had undisguised irony. The criticism was directed towards her. Everyone here knew that she was close with Zhao Lin Lang and cold with Zhao Liuli. Now, she had done something to her stuff. Even if it had been unintentional, she would be unable to give a convincing explanation in self-defense. In addition, she had done this intentionally. Even if she had a mouth as long as her body, she wouldn't be able to defend her innocence.

Li Xiang clenched her teeth. Just as she wanted to say more, she heard Empress Chen slowly say, "Never mind. Your mother will come to the palace. Since she hasn't raised her child well, then this empress will teach you how a girl of your status should behave in front of her."

Stunned, Li Xiang looked up. She felt her extremely incredulous.

To have her mother called to the palace and to discipline her in front of her mother. Wasn't that intentionally damaging their reputation?

She opened her mouth, "Your Majesty...."

However, Empress Chen didn't give her any more opportunities to refute. Empress Chen turned around and left the back of the hall without saying if she wanted her to continue to kneel or if she could stand up. Zhao Liuli and Gao Dan Yang directly followed Empress Chen to also leave. Wei Luo was behind them.

Li Xiang looked up to hatefully glare at Wei Luo.

Wei Luo lifted her eyes to look at her. An imperceptible smile flashed through her eyes. She came closer, then leaned over and quietly said, "Li Xiang, do you know how to write foolishly stupid?"

Li Xiang clenched her teeth and didn't say anything.

Wei Luo faintly smiled and continue, "Originally, I didn't know. But after seeing you today, I suddenly understand."

Then, ignoring Li Xiang's stare, she caught up with Liuli and left together.

Li Xiang looked at her departing figure. Her nails were deeply embedded in her flesh, but she didn't feel the slightest pain.

## Chapter 78.2

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An hour later, Elder Princess Gao Yang Zhang came to the palace from Prince Ru Yang's residence.

With a graceful bearing, Elder Princess Gao Yang walked into Zhao Yang Hall. She was wearing a honey color robe, an outer robe decorated with plum blossoms, orchids, chrysanthemum, and bamboo, and a light green skirt.

Before she had come here, she heard the Empress Chen was looking for her, but she didn't know the reason. As soon as she entered the hall, she saw Empress Chen and a few steps below her, there was Li Xiang with her head lowered. Her face immediately stiffened. She was preoccupied as she first saluted, then she straightened to asked, "What has Xiang-er done to upset older sister-in-law to the point of especially inviting me into the palace?"

Elder Princess Gao Yang loved her daughter dearly. Seeing Li Xiang pitifully standing there without a seat, her heart inevitably felt bad. So the tone of her voice had been her slightly acidic when she asked her question.

Empress Chen picked up a white jade cup with a hibiscus pattern from a square table, lowered her head to take a sip of e mei mao feng tea, and unhurriedly said, "Of course, there was a reason why I called you here. If there wasn't anything important, you probably wouldn't be willing to take even one step into my Qing Xi Palace."

Elder Princess Gao Yang was stifled by her words.

Empress Chen faintly glanced at her and allowed her to sit down on a rosewood chair. "Mama Qiu, bring over the hairpin that Liuli used for her hairpin ceremony. Let Elder Princess look at it."

Mama Qiu made a noise of acknowledgement. Soon after, she brought the hairpin that had been broken into two pieces over on a tray to Zhao Xuan.

Zhao Xuan glanced at it. Confused, she asked, "Why does older sister-in-law want me to look at this?"

Empress Chen didn't answer her question. In an indifferent tone, she said, "It couldn't be that Elder Princess usually curtails her children's spending? To the point that your daughter doesn't even have a single presentable hairpin? Today, Li Xiang saw Liuli's hairpin, then she secretly took it out to see. I won't mention the looking. But, not only did she look, she broke it."

After a pause, seeing that Elder Princess Gao Yang's face had turned ugly, she continued, "If this was a normal hairpin, this empress would feel its beneath my dignity to fuss over it. But, my son gave this hairpin to Liuli and it was used for her adulthood ceremony. It has exceptional significance. How could this empress not feel upset?"

Hearing these words, Zhao Xuan calmed down. After thinking, she said, "Where was this hairpin made? I'll have someone make another one for Liuli. Why does older sister-in-law have to be so angry? Xiang-er didn't do this intentional. Don't scare her."

"Does Elder Princess still not understand this empress's meaning?" Empress Chen put down the white jade cup on the table. She became sterner and her voice was severe as she said, "Would paying a hairpin fix the problem? She dare to casually take something that a princess used for her hairpin ceremony. What do established rules meant to her? Useless or empty words? Has she developed into the temperament that she had today because you never taught her these rules?"

Reprimanded by her in front of Zhao Yang Hall's palace servant girls, Zhao Xuan suddenly felt as if she had lost her face. She gripped the armchair and said, "Older sister-in-law..."

After looking at her for a moment, Empress Chen look away and lightly said, "Regardless if she done it intentionally or not, Li Xiang's understanding of rules must be properly taught. By chance,

I have a book called Nei Xun. Mama Qiu will read it for her to recite. When Li Xiang recites the entire book, she can leave Zhao Yang Hall."

Hearing these words, Li Xiang incredulously looked up.

That book had twenty pages. If she had to recite it, she might not even finish until tomorrow morning!

Elder Princess Gao Yang probably also knew this. Although she wasn't happy with this result, Li Xiang was the one who had done something wrong first. She stood up to plead for leniency, "Older sister-in-law, please be magnanimous. Xiang-er is still a child. Don't lower yourself to her level..."

However, Empress Chen didn't acknowledge her words. She tilted her head at Mama Qiu, "Read."

Mama Qiu opened to the first page of Nei Xun and complied with reading out loud, "Quiet and pure. Leisurely and carefree. Dignified and sincere. The virtues a woman should have are..."

Although Empress Chen normally looked amiable and polite, there was still fire in her bones. After all, she was someone that had been in the battlefields. Even if she had retired and curbed her wings, she had once been an eagle that soared through skies.

She would never forget how Li Xiang and Zhao Lin Lang had bullied Liuli when they were children. When Liuli had fallen into the lake that winter, she had almost lost her life. Although on the surface, it was seventh prince's fault, her heart knew that Zhao Lin Lang and Li Xiang were definitely related to this incident.

Fortunately, Liuli was okay. Otherwise, she wouldn't have stopped until she held them accountable.

During the past several years, she had only seemed friendly because they hadn't committed any crime in an area that was under her control. Today, Li Xiang's mind had been muddle-headed. She had actually committed a crime under her eyes. How

could she lightly let her off?

As Mama Qiu's slowly read the book, Li Xiang and Elder Princess Gao Yang's faces didn't look good.

Li Xiang couldn't remember anything that Mama Qiu read. She didn't have the slightest impression even right after Mama Qiu finished reading a section.

Empress Chen didn't continue staying here any longer, "This empress is going back to rest. Li Xiang will stay here to learn. Once she's finished reciting, order people to inform me. At any time, Mama Qiu will come here to quiz her." Then, she looked at Elder Princess Gao Yang. With a slightly eased tone, she said, "Does Elder Princess want to talk with this empress in a warm room or stay here to wait?"

Zhao Xuan put away her anger and coldly said, "Thank you older sister-in-law for your kind intentions. I'll stay here to accompany Xiang-er."

Empress Chen nodded and didn't force her. She glanced at Li Xiang, then she said, "Don't blame this empress for being too harsh. Li Xiang is almost thirteen. Soon, she'll be married. If she's not well behaved, after she's married, she'll suffer grievances from her mother-in-law. This empress is only thinking about her future."

Zhao Xuan was immediately full of anger, but she still had to rise from her chair and unwilling say, "Older sister-in-law is right. I'll properly discipline Xiang-er."

Empress Chen said, "En." Then, she left for the warm room.

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Inside Chen Hua Hall.

Wei Luo didn't immediately go home. Liuli had earnestly asked her to stay and keep her company.

Since she didn't have any urgent tasks and she wasn't in a good mood, it would be fine to stay here for a while. Zhao Liuli seemed to still be mad at Yang Zhen. The day was almost over, but he still didn't appear. What exactly was he busy with?

## Chapter 78.3

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The sun set at the western horizon and it was soon nightfall.

Zhao Liuli and Wei Luo had dinner together. The two of them were sitting at a round ironwood table with a marble center. There was a palace meal in front of them. Wei Luo finished drinking a bowl of slowly stewed red dates, coconut milk, and snow clam congee. Seeing that the bowl of soup in front Zhao Liuli wasn't even touched, she reached her hand out and waved it in front of her. "Liuli, what are you thinking about? If you don't start eating, the dishes will become cold by the time you start."

Zhao Liuli suddenly returned to her senses. She looked preoccupied with her thoughts as she picked up a white jade spoon, scooped up a spoonful of snow clam congee, and slowly put it into her mouth.

Wei Luo silently sighed in her heart. This wasn't the type of thing that she should interfere with. She could only pretend that she didn't know anything.

But, this palace food was pretty good... She picked up a piece of osmanthus and lotus root cake and ate a bite. It was sweet and sticky. She had already eaten three of these. Just as she was about to eat a fourth piece, a shadow was cast on the round table. When she looked up, she saw Yang Zhen standing outside the door wearing black robes. His dark eyes were staring at Zhao Liuli.

Zhao Liuli probably also saw his shadow. But, her heart was mad at him. She engrossed herself in picking up a piece of three-ingredients emerald roll and stuffing the entire piece in her mouth until her cheeks were bulging. She single-heartedly devoted herself to eating and refused to look at him.

Yang Zhen was a bodyguard. He couldn't enter the room without her permission. He could only stand outside the door. He looked at Zhao Liuli and hoarsely called out, "Your Highness..."



A long time later, Zhao Liuli finally lifted her head and looked at him. Her small face was stretched taut as she stiffly asked, "... Where did you go?"

Yang Zhen was usually reticent and wasn't good at explaining himself. Facing Zhao Liuli's question, he only replied, "Come out and take a walk with me."

Zhao Liuli picked up her silver chopsticks and poked at the almond cheese in front of her. "If older brother Yang Zhen doesn't tell me where he wants to go, I won't go."

She was still mad at him for not appearing for an entire day.

Yang Zhen looked at her. Twilight's glow was sprinkled on his tall and lonely figure as he stood outside the door. He seemed at a loss of what to do next.

Wei Luo wasn't willing to meddle in their business. She lowered her head without saying a word and continued eating.

A long time later, Yang Zheng finally conceded. He slowly said, "Today is Your Highness's birthday. I prepared a gift for you."

Zhao Liuli's eyes brightened. She looked up towards him. Her recent unhappiness was completely swept away. "Really? What are you giving me?"

Yang Zhen's cold face slightly smiled. His thin lips were slightly curved up, "Really." After a pause, he said, "Your Highness, follow me."

Other than Liuli's trusted servant girls, there wasn't anyone else in the room. One was Yun Zi and the other was Yun Shu. Both of them knew about her relationship with Yang Zhen, but she had secretly ordered them to never mention this in front of Empress Chen.

Zhao Liuli was very moved. She tilted her head and looked at Wei Luo, "Ah Luo..."

So, she still remembered her.

Wei Luo thoughtfully said, "Oh." Her long, fan-like eyelashes fluttered. In a short while, she said, "You can go... I'll pretend that I don't know anything."

Hearing her words, Zhao Liuli put down her worries and gratefully said, "Then, I'll be gone for a bit. After you finish eating dinner, I'll have older brother bring you back."

Hearing this, Wei Luo paused in getting food. Before she could say, "No need", Zhao Liuli had already left with Yang Zhen.

She pursed her lower lip. She had abruptly lost her appetite.

She held her cheeks and sunk into contemplation.

Yang Zhen had accompanying Zhao Liuli for so long and had always been considerate of her needs. In the end, Zhao Liuli had fallen in love with Yang Zhen. Although Zhao Jie didn't always keep her company, he was also always thoughtful and considerate towards her. Then, what did she feel towards Zhao Jie?

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After she finished dinner, seeing that Liuli still hadn't return, Wei Luo wanted to go to the back courtyard to look for her and also walk around to aid her digestion.

There was a large garden behind Chen Hua Hall. There were crabapple trees planted on all sides of the garden. Each tree was near the flowering season and the entire garden was strongly fragrant. During the day, the pink flowers were gorgeous and enchanting. After the flowers were finished blooming, they would bear bright red, crisp and sweet crabapples. They were Zhao Liuli's favorite.

While it was the blossoming season, it was unfortunately evening. Wei Luo couldn't see the flowers clearly. She could only see the misty moon and the sparse, bright stars.

Wei Luo didn't let the palace servant girls follow her as she slowly walked on the limestone paved path. She hadn't walk far before she saw two people standing beneath a nearby crabapple tree. It was Yang Zhen and Zhao Liuli.

She stopped walking. It wouldn't be good to disturb them. Just as she was about to turn around to leave, she saw Yang Zhen taking out and opening a cloth bag. There was suddenly brightness. A countless stream of fireflies striving to be the first and fearing to be the last flew out of the bag. They brought yellow flashes of light that lit up that piece of the world.

The fireflies flew all over the place. The light started from the two people and slowly spread to light up the nearby crabapple flowers and the night sky. It seemed as if the lustrous and glories stars were falling from the sky.

A firefly flew in front of Wei Luo and circled around her head for a moment, then light as a feather, it flew away.

She looked at the two nearby people. This scene had also stunned Zhao Liuli. After blankly looking for a long time, she finally recovered and asked Yang Zhen, "Did older brother Yang Zhen disappear for an entire day so that I could see this?"

Yang Zhen nodded and asked, "Do you like it?"

"Like!" She nodded without any hesitation. She tilted her head and looked at the fireflies that were flying further and further away. There was a myriad of lights reflected in her eyes. "Really pretty..."

There were a few fireflies that hadn't flown away and were flying around them in circles.

Yang Zhen raised his hand several times, but in the end, he finally put his down. He slowly and seriously said, "Its enough that Your Highness likes it."

Zhao Liuli was smiling in her eyes. Underneath the crab tree, she

looked away from the fireflies and put her hands behind her back. "Older brother Yang Zhen, lean down a bit. I have something I want to say to you."

Yang Zhen leaned down, "What does Your Highness want to say?"

But, she didn't say. Instead, she said, "Lean down more."

Yang Zhen leaned over more.

She wasn't satisfied until his head was next to her and his ears were right in front of her.

Zha Liuli slightly closed and curved her eyes into a smile. She looked at the reticent man in front of her, from his handsome eyebrows down to his cold lips. In the end, she stood up on her toes and kissed his lips without warning.

Yang Zhen suddenly stiffened.

Soft lips had briefly and lightly pressed against his. If he didn't smell her faint, residual scent, he would have thought that it had been his hallucination.

He slowly straightened and looked at the sincerely smiling, little girl. Her smile was like a kitten that had just successfully stolen milk. She had clearly overstepped the bounds of what was proper, but she didn't seem to care the slightest bit. She batted her eyelashes and said, "Older brother Yang Zhen never says anything. There's a lot hidden in your heart, but you never say it out loud. But, it's okay if you don't say anything. Just let me say it..." Slightly shy, she pursed her lips. A long time later, with a blushing face, she said, "Kiss me."

Yang Zhen stared at her in astonishment.

A short while later, he finally couldn't resist. He leaned over, wrapped his arm around her soft waist, and pressed her against the crabapple tree. His thin lips pressed against her sweet, soft, pink lips. They were touchingly intertwined.

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Not far away, after Wei Luo had just seen this scene, a hand from behind covered her eyes.

At the same time, a familiar voice said, "Don't look."

Wei Luo, "..."

Her sight had been blocked and there was only darkness left, so the warmth from the man touching her was even more distinct. Not used to this feeling, she struggled. But, Zhao Jie used his other arm to hold her waist and his chin was in the curve between her shoulder and neck. She felt his warm breath on her neck as he said, "Ah Luo, I want to kiss you too."

Wei Luo stopped resisting, pursed her lips, and said, "You can't."

He had already kissed her behind the divider screen today and Her Majesty had almost discovered them. She hadn't even settled this loss with him. Now, he wanted to kiss her in front of Liuli and Yang Zhen. There was no way she would agree!

This wasn't an appropriate place to talk. Zhao Jie held her hand and brought her out of this place and under a lushly flowering crabapple tree

The foliage here was dense and provided excellent cover. He wouldn't have to worry about anyone seeing anything.

Just now, Wei Luo thought of something else. She asked, "You already know about Liuli and Yang Zhen's relationship? You're not going to stop them?"

Zhao Jie had been thinking about her the entire day. He only wanted to properly hug her right now. He stood behind her with his arms around her waist. His cheek touched her soft and delicate cheek. Towards other people's business, he wasn't willing to waste extra words. "Yang Zhen is a sincere and loyal person. He's worthy of Liuli's trust and hopes."

Only because of this? He was a little too open-minded.

She had thought he would definitely oppose this.

If Zhao Liuli knew that he thought this way, she would definitely regret being so sneaky in front of him. If she had known this earlier, what was there to be worried about?

Finished saying this, Zhao Jie didn't say anything for a long time.

He tilted his head and kissed Wei Luo's cheek. The little girl wanted to evade by turning her head, so he followed the direction of her movement. He held her soft, little earlobe in his mouth and lightly bit and sucked on it. The petite body trembled in his arms. In the end, he couldn't bear to alarm her too much, so he relaxed his hold on her and hoarsely said, "Ah Luo, this prince has to go Shanxi and probably won't be back for two months."

Then, after pausing, he touched his cheek to hers and said, "After I come back, reject Song Hui's engagement and marry me, okay?"

# Chapter 79.1

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In front of her, there was the scent of crabapple flowers. Behind her, there was the expansive warmth from the man hugging her. She had to admit that she did feel something.

Wei Luo's ear felt itchy and she shrugged her shoulders. To avoid disturbing Yang Zhen and Zhao Liuli who weren't far away, her voice was quiet when she asked, "Why are you going to Shanxi?"

The little girl's mouth always rejected him, but her heart truly cared for him. Zhao Jie hugged her waist a little tighter, buried his face in her neck to breathe in her scent, "There's a drought there. The extent of the disaster is very serious. Imperial father commanded me there for disaster relief. I have to leave the day after tomorrow." He paused for a moment, kissed her neck, and continued saying, "Don't worry. This prince will come back very quickly."

Her body had a simple and elegant scent. It wasn't strong. He could only smell it when he was very close. It didn't seem like it was from a satchel bag filled with common spices. Instead, the soft and alluring scent seemed like it was coming from her bones. In the end, he couldn't help sighing, "Little one, what perfume did you put on your body? It smells really good. Why hasn't this prince smelled it before?"

Wei Luo's ears were blushing. Before, he had presented himself as a proper and considerate big brother and had never hugged her this closely. Now, he easily hugged her without even asking for her permission.

She had learned to make this scent from Han-shi. It was made from blending musk, rose, two types of jasmine, and four other flowers. A bamboo basket filled with these closely packed flowers would only yield enough perfume to fill a small, white porcelain bottle. Wei Luo was reluctant to use this and would only sprinkle a

few drops in her bath water every day. Even with only this amount, her body would exude a faint fragrance after bathing. She had started doing this since she was eight years old. After five years, it would be strange if she didn't smell fragrant.

Wei Luo broke away from his hands and escaped from his embrace. Her lowered voice still showed her displeasure, "Big brother, say what you want to say, but don't casually touch me. What if someone else sees?"

Zhao Jie felt rather regretful that she had suddenly left his arms. Hearing her words, he curved his thin lips into a smile, "If someone sees, then you'll have to marry me. Wouldn't that be the best?"

Wei Luo suddenly stilled.

Behind the crabapple tree, Zhao Liuli and Yang Zhen probably hadn't separated yet. The sound of their close relationship intermittently traveled to her ears. Her charming face turned red. Fortunately, it was already late and the moon's light was dim and hazy. Her expression couldn't be clearly seen.

Since she wasn't answering, he asked her again, "Ah Luo, after this prince returns from Shanxi, will you marry me?"

She looked up and slowly said, "I have to carefully think about this."

Marriage wasn't a trifling matter. He had suddenly put this forward and she wasn't the slightest bit prepared. She had originally decided to end her engagement with Song Hui and hadn't thought about the person she would marry. At the current moment, she was already engaged, but he was in a hurry to marry her. Marriage was such an important matter. Of course, she had to carefully consider.

However, Wei Luo suddenly remembered that when they were at Jing He Villa, he had stood in front of her and asked her what type



of person she wanted to marry. She had said a person that treated her very, very well. He had also asked, "The way this prince treats you very well?"

At the time, she had thought he was joking and had easily dismissed his words. Now, she realized that wasn't the case. So, at that time, he already held wicked intentions towards her!

After having suddenly realized this, she surprisingly didn't feel angry. Instead, there was an indescribable feeling fermenting in her heart. The feeling rose until it filled her entire heart. She lifted her eyelashes up and directly looked at Zhao Jie's unfathomable, dark eyes without moving. Then, she suddenly said, "Big brother."

Zhao Jie stroked her little head as he gently said, "En, we'll do what you say. But, I can't wait too long. When this prince returns for Shanxi, I want your answer."

This time she didn't avoid his touch. She looked straight at him. Her dark, watery, almond eyes were bright and dazzling, "But, I have a condition."

Zhao Jie's hand stopped moving.

There was still a condition? He promised her that he would give her time to consider. It was already pretty good that he wasn't asking anything from her in return. This little one actually dared to ask something from him?

He lowered his head, involuntarily laughed, and said, "Tell me."

The little girl looked completely serious. Her big eyes blinked. "Before I finish thinking this through, you can't kiss me."

The smile on Zhao Jie's face froze. He suddenly didn't feel like laughing.

But, that little mouth didn't understand his thoughts. She continued, "And you can't casually touch me either."

Wei Luo's thoughts were very simple. She was an unmarried,

innocent virginal girl. How could she continue to be constantly hugged and cuddled by him? If the hugging and cuddling wasn't bad enough, he kept kissing her without even greeting her first. Right now, no one had seen yet. If someone saw, her reputation would be completely ruined.

Zhao Jie carefully thought this over. He would be leaving soon and would be gone for two months. He wouldn't be able to kiss or hug her during this time anyways. After he came back from Shanxi, she would be almost done considering and this condition would have expired. He nodded and scratched her pretty, little nose. "Okay, this prince will promise you this."

She retreated a step back and covered her nose. Her eyes stared at him. "Big brother, you just said you wouldn't casually touch me. How could you go back on your word so quickly?"

Zhao Jie held his hands up, "..."

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This evening, Zhao Jie was very well behaved when he brought Wei Luo back to Duke Ying's residence. The two of them sat inside the carriage and he could only look at her. He wanted to hug her delicate and soft body, but he wasn't allowed.

Contrarily, Wei Luo was in a good mood. After returning home, she went to main room to tell Wei Kun she had returned, then she went to look for Chang Hong to say a few words with him.

Before she had returned, Wei Kun and Chang Hong had been worried. If they didn't know she had gone to the palace, they would have definitely sent people to look for her. Now, seeing that she had safely returned, they both set down their worries and had separately asked her why she came back so late.

## Chapter 79.2

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Wei Luo was sitting on a round drum-shaped stool. She held her cheeks and without a change in her expression, she answered, "Liuli wasn't in a good mood, so I stayed for a while to keep her company and also ate dinner at Chen Hua Hall."

Wei Chang Hong was sitting behind a vermillion-lacquered table inlaid with gold and decorated with spiral carvings. Zuo Zhuan's Annals was in front of him. Mister Xue's lecture today was about this book. This was a book that was normally read by fifteen or sixteen year olds. But, Chang Hong had a clever mind that learned new information quickly. At thirteen, Chang Hong had already studied all thirteen Confucian classics. Right now, he was just reviewing this book again.

Wei Chang Hong didn't doubt her words. He stood up, went to the nearby treasure grid shelves, took out an item, and delivered it to her, "After I was finished with my work, while I was outside, I bought these sugar ears and sesame candy. I remembered that you said you wanted to eat these a few days ago. I coincidentally saw them today and bought them."

Wei Luo accepted the candy and couldn't help feeling touched that he remembered, "I was only offhandedly saying that..."

A few days, she had suddenly wanted to eat sweet things and had said she wanted to eat sugar ears and sesame candy. She had already forgotten saying this. Unexpectedly, he had still remembered. Wei Luo put down the oiled packet on the table, opened it, picked up a piece of sugar ear, and ate it. It was sweet, soft, and flaky. She picked up another piece to feed Chang Hong. "It's really good. Eat one too."

Chang Hong opened his mouth, ate it directly from her hand, and chewed on the pastry. Just as he was about to speak, his line of sight stopped on her ear. He stopped moving and stared at her ear.

Wei Luo felt confused from the look in his eyes. Puzzled, she asked, "What's wrong? What did you see?"

His eyes turned. He lifted his hand to touch her small earlobe. Without any expression, he said, "There's a teeth mark here." Soon after, he looked up at her, "Ah Luo, who bit you?"

Wei Luo subconsciously stiffened. She forgot about the sugar ear in her mouth. Of course, she knew who had bitten her. Zhao Jie had bitten her ear a few times in Chen Hua Hall's back garden. But, she hadn't cared about it. She had thought it would have faded by now. Unexpectedly, there was still a mark left. But, it hadn't felt that painful when Zhao Jie had bitten her!

Wei Luo was internally surprised, but she faked an outwardly calm appearance. She held her ear and lightly said, "Oh. This was from me playing with Liuli... I said a joke about her. She was angry and bit my ear once."

At this time, she could only wrong Liuli. She couldn't confess that it was Zhao Jie... If she told the truth, wouldn't Chang Hong rush over to Prince Jing's residence to settle scores?

Hearing this, Wei Chang Hong's face immediately looked serious and unhappy, "She bit you just because you were joking? Don't play with her in the future."

Wei Luo couldn't resist letting out a burst of laughter. His shortcoming was too obvious. It made even her, the person lying, feel a bit embarrassed.

After Wei Luo fed him a few pieces of sugar ear and said good words about Zhao Liuli, he reluctantly stopped pursuing this matter. Seeing that it wasn't early, Wei Luo said good-bye, returned to her room, washed up, changed clothes, and prepared to sleep.

She slept very peacefully that night without any dreams and woke up the next morning in good spirits.

In contrast, Li Xiang hadn't been well inside Zhao Yang Hall.

Li Xiang had spent the entire night in Zhao Yang Hall drowsily memorizing a book. She had fallen asleep in the rosewood chair several times, but Mama Qiu had mercilessly woken her up each time. By the next morning, she had finally memorized Nei Xun's twenty pages. She had recited the entire book in front of Mama Qiu and Empress Chen allowed her to leave the palace.

Only one day had passed, but she looked significantly withered. Her eyes were bloodshot and there black circles underneath her eyes. Her face was also pale. She looked completely different from yesterday's beautiful and bright appearance.

Li Xiang and Elder Princess Gao Yang left the palace together. They went inside the carriage to return home.

Inside the black, flat-roofed carriage, Li Xiang finally couldn't resist collapsing in Elder Princess Gao Yang's arms, "Mother..."

Elder Princess Gao Yang's heart couldn't feel any worse. She took Li Xiang into her arms, gently patted her back, and comforted her with the words, "Xiang-er, be good. Don't cry... Have a good rest when we get home. Just pretend that yesterday didn't happen."

The person who had disciplined her daughter was the empress, the most respectable and honored woman in the country. So what if she was the elder princess? Her status was still lower than hers. Zhao Xun's heart was definitely unwilling to accept this. She and Empress Chen had never gotten along and now she had punished her daughter. How could her heart feel okay?

Although an older sister-in-law was like a mother, she had stretched her hand too far!

Li Xiang grievously cried and her tears soon soaked through her mother's clothes. Before she had time to regain her breath, she gasped, "That hairpin... It's all Wei Luo's fault..."

Although Li Xiang had broken the hairpin, she had intended to use it to harm Wei Luo. She hadn't expected that Wei Luo would turn the table on her! She wasn't willing to accept this loss, but she didn't have a way to say these words. She could only shut all of her grievances in her heart and change her words into tears to cry out.

Elder Princess didn't clearly hear the second part of her words. Feeling bad that she wasn't able to help her daughter from suffering, she could only hug her and say, "Precious Xiang-er, when we go back home, mother will buy you many hairpins. Did you like Zhao Liuli's hairpin? Mother will have people make a hairpin exactly like that one, okay?"

She shook her head. She sobbed and sniffled as she said, "I don't want it. What's so good about Zhao Liuli's things? It's only unusual."

The carriage quickly arrived and stopped at Prince Ru Yang's residence. The servant girls quickly came out through the entrance to help them out of the carriage.

Prince Ru Yang had waited for them an entire night. Seeing them safely coming back, he let out a sigh in relief. Last night, he had heard the news from the palace and knew that Li Xiang had stay there overnight because of Empress Chen, but he didn't know why.

Li Xiang wiped her tears. With red eyes, she followed Elder Princess Gao Yang off the carriage.

Seeing his precious daughter like this, Prince Ru Yang couldn't resist saying, "Xiang-er, what happened..."

Before he could finish speaking, Elder Princess Gao Yang glared at him. He immediately closed his mouth and didn't continue to question. Then, with a smile, he said, "It's good that you returned. Is Xiang-er tired? Your older brother is waiting in the main hall for you. Daddy has specially prepared an entire table of your favorite foods."

The group of people walked to the main hall. When they were almost at the main hall's doors, Prince Ru Yang shouted, "Song-er, your mother and young sister have returned. Why haven't you come out?"

Inside the hall, there was a handsome teenage boy wearing an indigo robe with a feather pattern sitting on a rosewood chair. He didn't look that different from before. But, a more careful look would show that some of his recalcitrant and arrogance had been lost. There was a shallow birthmark beneath his eye. His dark, deep eyes looked up from the golden hairpin with emeralds.

He quietly put the hairpin into his sleeve, stood up, and walked out of the hall.

# Chapter 80.1

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At the dining table, Li Xiang inevitably brought up the topic of Zhao Liuli's hairpin ceremony.

After Li Xiang finished eating a bowl of crab tofu soup, she was still feeling indignant. She resentfully mumbled, "I really don't understand what's so good about that Wei Luo. Why does the Her Majesty value her so much..."

Elder Princess Gao Yang was worried that Li Xiang wasn't eating enough and pushed a plate of fu ling pastry in front of her. She continued to coaxingly comfort her daughter, "Don't think about it anymore. First, fill up your stomach. You spent all night memorizing that book. You must be starving right now."

When Li Xiang just returned home, she was really hungry. But, by now, she was already mostly full. She shook her head and said, "Mother, I'm full." She turned her head to thoughtfully look at Li Song. He was sitting across from her, holding a pair of chopsticks, and looked absent-minded. She opened her mouth to ask, "Older brother, what are you thinking about? You've been sitting there without eating anything."

Li Song suddenly returned to his senses, but there wasn't any change in his expression. He calmly picked up a piece of radish cake, ate a bite, and mildly said, "Nothing much."

Seeing him like this, Elder Princess Gao Yang couldn't resist being concerned, "Is your hand hurting again? You haven't been using your left hand to practice martial arts, right? Do you remember the doctor's instructions? You have to properly recuperate. Don't be impatient during this short period of time."

"En, I remember his words."

After he had been injured at Duke Ding's residence and returned home, Li Song had obediently stayed at home to recuperate. Prince



Ru Yang and Elder Princess Gao Yang wanted to find out who injured their son, but after investigating for a month, they still didn't have any results.

Because this mishap had occurred at Duke Ding's residence, Duke Ding felt guilty about this matter. He had come to see Li Song several times during the past month and helped Prince Ru Yang investigate who had entered and exited that bamboo forest on that day. Unfortunately, there were too many people at the residence that day and it was difficult to find out. In addition, that bamboo forest was in area that most people didn't pay any attention to. And so, they still haven't found out who the culprit was.

Elder Princess Gao Yang had asked Li Song about this once, but Li Song refused to say anything.

Later, seeing that she wouldn't be able to get any information from him, Elder Princess Gao Yang could only give up and treat it as if he didn't know whom the other person was either.

And so, until now, there weren't any clues.

Fortunately, the doctor had said the injury on his wrist wasn't serious. As long as he properly cared for it, it wouldn't be a problem for him to fully recover. If this weren't true, Elder Princess Gao Yang wouldn't have been able to seem so calm today. Thinking of this, Elder Princess Gao Yang personally picked up the ladle to fill a bowl with ginseng silkie soup and put the bowl in front of Li Song. She urged, "Drink this bowl of soup. It'll be good for your hand. Don't think your mother is being too troublesome. This is for your own good."

Li Song finally pulled the corner of his mouth into a smile. He used his right hand to accept the green celadon bowl, "When have I ever said such words? Mother, don't falsely accuse me." He used a spoon to stir the silkie soup. Soon after, he drank the bowl in one gulp. After putting down the bowl, he said, "I'm full. I'm going to go out and walk for a bit."

Then, without waiting for a response, he stood up and left the main hall.

Elder Princess Gao Yang looked at his departing figure until he walked to the entrance. Then, she helplessly sighed, "I don't know what Song-er is thinking about. He seems lost in his thoughts every day. When I ask him what's wrong, he won't tell me anything. He seems rather distant and unfamiliar with us lately. My heart feels so unpleasant."

Prince Ru Yang didn't like seeing his wife feel sad. He patted her hand and comforted her, "Didn't he always have a strange temperament? Our child has grown up. It's natural for him to have his own thoughts."

Although this was true, Elder Princess Gao Yang's mood didn't improve. Faced with a table full of food, she didn't have any appetite.

On the other side, Li Xiang was biting her chopsticks. Her thoughts turned and she said, "I think I might know what older brother is thinking about..."

Elder Princess Gao Yang immediately looked at her and said in surprise, "Oh? Tell us. What is your older brother thinking about? How did you find out?"

Li Xiang pondered for a while, then she slowly said, "When older brother came back from Duke Ding's residence that day, there was an emerald hairpin in his hand..."

She told her parents about the scene she had seen that day. She also said that Li Song had tightly held onto the hairpin and didn't seem to have the slightest intention of loosening his grip. Then, she said, "When I went looking for older brother the past few days, I also frequently saw him holding that hairpin... A girl probably gave older brother the hairpin? But, he won't say anything. And I didn't dare to continue asking him about it."

Elder Princess Gao Yang felt surprised. Her son had grown up. He had a girl that he liked. This was good news. Why didn't he tell them? If the two families were well matched in terms of social status, it would be mutually satisfying if they became relatives by marriage. It would be fine to set down a date for his wedding earlier! Her son would soon be sixteen. It was time for him to marry anyways. After thinking, she asked, "Xiang-er, do you know which family that girl is from? A girl that your older brother likes must be rather outstanding."

Li Xiang shook her head and honestly said, "I don't know either. Based on that hairpin, she's not a girl from an ordinary family. She's probably a daughter from a noble family. If mother is curious, ask older brother directly."

But, Elder Princess Gao Yang felt anxious, "I'm worried that he won't tell me..."

Elder Princess Gao Yang's worries weren't unreasonable. Li Song definitely wouldn't tell her. He wouldn't even admit to himself that he was in love with Wei Luo.

After Li Song left the main hall and returned to his own courtyard, he didn't go to his room. Instead, he stood under a large banyan tree and didn't move for a long time.

The trunk of the banyan tree was thick and solid. It was very similar to the tree that had been in his courtyard at Jing He Villa.

At that time, he and Wei Luo had stood underneath a tree. She had unhesitatingly pierced that hairpin into his chest. Even now, he hadn't gotten over it. When he looked at the golden emerald hairpin in his hand, he couldn't help feeling a pain in his chest.

Even so, he couldn't help taking out that hairpin to carefully look at.

What was so good about this? Wasn't it only Wei Luo's thing?

His eyes deepened. He closed his hand around the hairpin and

tightly held it. He really wanted to stab that little girl's chest, so she could experience what he was currently feeling. On the surface, the wound had already healed. But, the wound in his heart wouldn't heal. It only festered. He didn't know when he would be completely recovered.

There was a person hidden in his heart that he couldn't let go of or give up on. But, he couldn't let other people know. He could only hide her deeply in his heart while his heart was rotted.

## Chapter 80.2

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Two days later, Zhao Jie was leaving for Shanxi.

He didn't see Wei Luo before leaving. She didn't know if it was because he was busy or because he had promised to give her time to consider. He had promised her that he wouldn't casually touch her until she was finished thinking things through. He wasn't Liu Xia Hui. Since the girl that he liked already knew his feelings, he couldn't resist wanting to be affectionate with her. Rather than not being able to control himself, it would better if they temporarily didn't see each other.

(T/N: Liu Xia Hui was an ancient Chinese politician known for his exceptional virtuous behavior. There's a story that on a cold night, he held a woman in his arms the entire night because he was worried that she would freeze to death and he wasn't tempted to do anything.)

And so, when he left the capital today, Wei Luo was watering flowers in the back courtyard's greenhouse. She didn't know that he had left.

At this time, it was already late spring. Other than the peony flowers, all of the flowers had already finished blooming.

Han-shi created a new type of rouge that had a natural color and she named it Hong Yang Fu. If a woman's face looked haggard, she could apply a little bit of this on her face. Her wan face would immediately shine with radiance. Although Wei Luo rarely used rouge, she felt that this rouge had practical use. She wanted Han-shi to give her small box of it, so she could put it in her dressing case and have it if she ever wanted or needed to use it.

This type of rouge was made from a type of peony that would produce a cinnabar red color.

After Wei Luo finished watering the flowers, she took a bamboo

basket from Bai Lan's hands and was preparing to pick the petals from the peony flowers one by one. From out of nowhere, a child appeared, snatched the basket from her hand, and lifted it up as he said, "Older sister Ah Luo, which flower do you want? I'll help you pick it."

She looked down. Wei Chang Mi was wearing a sapphire blue robe with a Chinese unicorn pattern. His round, little face had a smile and his eyes were as bright as the full moon when he looked at her.

Since that time when Wei Luo protected him from Li Xiang, he had become even closer to her. Although he was young, he knew who treated him well and who didn't.

Surprised, Wei Luo said, "Oh? Do you know what flower I'm going to pick? Did you come here to cause trouble for me?"

Wei Chang Mi repeatedly shook his head and earnestly said, "I won't cause trouble. I'll pick whichever type of flower that older sister Ah Luo tells me to."

Seeing his deadly earnest appearance, Wei Luo couldn't resist smiling. Since he was in high spirits, she didn't reject his offer in helping her pick flowers. Unfortunately, the little fellow was still too young and didn't know how to properly pick the flower petals. His chubby, little hand went down and pulled out an entire flower. It couldn't be used like that.

In the end, Wei Luo couldn't let him continue like this. She had him stand at the side to watch as she picked the flower petals herself. He wasn't happy with this, so she had him stay by her side and carry the basket. Fortunately, the basket wasn't heavy. He had more than enough strength to carry it.

Not much time later, they finished filling more than half the basket with flower petals. The basket was sent to Han-shi's Orchid Courtyard.

On the way back to her room, they met second branch's daughter that had been born outside, Wei Bao Shan. Second Madam still wouldn't acknowledge her as a Miss from Duke Ying's family. Although she had Wei as her last name, her name hadn't been changed to match the naming tradition for House Wei's daughters. And, although she lived in Duke Ying's residence, she wasn't counted as one of his granddaughters or included in the seniority ranking. When the servants saw her, they would only politely call her, "Miss". Her position in Duke Ding's family was rather awkward.

(T/N: If she were included in the seniority ranking based on birth order, the servants would address her as "Third Miss" or "Fourth Miss" instead of only "Miss". And Wei Luo and Wei Zheng would be changed to Fifth Miss and Sixth Miss, respectively.)

Wei Bao Shan was wearing a moon white top with a plum blossom design and a coral red, pleated skirt. Her walk was light and her bearing was graceful. She looked as fragile as a willow tree. Her style of character was lovely.

There was a servant girl dressed in a blue robe behind her. She had probably brought this servant girl from outside.

Wei Bao Shan was one year older than Wei Luo. But, because her body was weak and thin, her body wasn't as well developed. Although she was pretty, she didn't have a woman's sweet and charming beauty. People would feel her beauty was boring if they looked at her for too long.

Although she was a year older than Wei Luo, when she saw her, she still moved to the side and saluted, "Greetings Fourth Miss."

Wei Luo stopped and looked at her. Perhaps, it was because of Du-shi and Wei Zheng, she didn't have any good feelings towards a daughter born from the other woman. After a pause, she lightly said, "You don't need to be so courteous. You can stand up."

Then, in a few steps, Wei Luo left the area with Wei Chang Mi.

She didn't have any intentions of talking with her.

Wei Bao Shan slowly straightened and looked at Wei Luo's departing figure for a moment, then she turned around and continue walking.



# Chapter 81.1

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Recently, while Wei Luo was idly staying at home, Wei Chang Mi had been very sticky. He was always coming over to look for her and she couldn't brush him off. If he wasn't bothering her to go water flowers in the greenhouse together, then it was to go fishing in the back courtyard. There was even one time when he asked her to go with him to the lotus pond to collect lotus seeds.

A few days later, Wei Luo became sick. The doctor said she had gotten sick from the cold weather. She would be fine after a few days of bed rest.

Her sickness was related to collecting the lotus seeds. Her hands and feet had felt sore after she spent the day accompanying Wei Chang Mi collecting lotus seeds, so she didn't have the energy to dry her hair after taking a bath at night. On the next morning, she had felt dizzy when she woke up. Because Wei Chang Hong thought this was related to Wei Chang Mi, when Wei Chang Mi came over to play with Wei Luo a few days later, Chang Hong blocked the doorway and wouldn't let him come closer to Wei Luo.

Wei Chang Mi was young and had a pure heart. When he found out that he was the reason that older sister Wei Luo got sick, he immediately felt guilty. When Chang Hong was away, he secretly snuck into Wei Luo's inner room. Standing next to her bed, he saw that Wei Luo was still sleeping, so he didn't saying anything at first to avoid waking her up. He stroked her forehead and pulled her blanket up. "Older sister Ah Luo, you have to be good and drink your medicine. If you drink your medicine, you'll get better quicker." Then, he lowered his head and murmured, "I'll never ask older sister Ah Luo to gather lotus seeds again... I'm sorry. Older sister Ah Luo, get better soon."

He thought that Wei Luo was sleeping. But Wei Luo was awake, she only had her eyes closed to rest.

This little fellow actually said sorry to her... She thought that he didn't understand anything. It really made her take notice of his improvement.

Wei Chang Mi continued to chatter for a while at her bedside. She didn't know where he had learned this behavior from. He was so young and he already had the bad habit of rambling. In the end, he didn't leave until Chang Hong heartlessly took him out of the room when he saw him standing here. Chang Hong had just come by to bring a bowl of medicine.

Chang Hong forced him out to the verandah. He hugged Chang Hong's leg while crying, "I don't want to go. I want to keep older sister Ah Luo company..."

Chang Hong thought he was very bothersome. Without sparing his feelings, he told him, "Ah Luo only needs me to keep her company."

As soon as he heard there was no hope, his cries became more pitiful sounding. It disturbed Wei Luo to the point that she couldn't peacefully rest in her room. Fortunately, a short while later, Qin-shi appeared and used every means possible to coax him into not crying. While sniffing, he left with Qin-shi.

While lying down in her room, Wei Luo thought little kids were too horrible... Chang Hong never bother anyone like this when he was a child, right? What was wrong with Wei Chang Mi?

But, since he acknowledged his mistake, she would reluctantly forgive him this time.

As Wei Luo thought about this, she drowsily fell asleep.

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Today was Liang Yu Rong's father, Marquis Ping Yuan's birthday. Wei Luo couldn't go, so she asked Chang Hong to bring her gift to Liang Yu Rong.

But, after thinking about, she was still worried. She urged him,

"Tell her to remember the words I told her a few days ago."

Chang Hong held the box of tea and asked, "What did you tell her?"

She didn't tell him and just told him to remind Liang Yu Rong.

As for what those words were about... Of course, it was the thing with Zhao Jue and Xiang Xuan that she had told Liang Yu Rong about in the carriage. Fortunately, Chang Hong wasn't a curious person. He didn't continue asking. He said he would do what she asked and left.

She hoped that with her reminder, Liang Yu Rong would constantly pay attention to Xiang Xuan's actions, so that Xiang Xuan wouldn't have an opportunity to get close to Liang Yu and there wouldn't be a scene of "illicit sexual relations due to drinking".

As expected, the next day, Liang Yu Rong impatiently came over to talk to her.

At this time, Wei Luo had already mostly recovered. She had just finished drinking a bowl of medicine and was eating the red bayberries preserved in sugar that Chang Hong had brought her.

Liang Yu Rong lifted her hanging curtain made of precious gems, energetically walked into her inner room, sat down across from her, and enthusiastically praised her, "Ah Luo, you truly have incredible foresight! That Xiang Xuan really did have evil plans of wanting to seduce my older brother!"

Today, she was wearing a crimson top with a rose pattern, an olive green crepe skirt, and a thin layer rouge on her face. She looked bright and beautiful.

Wei Luo chewed on her candied fruit and pushed the enamel plate with a lotus pattern towards her. Without any surprise, she blinked her eyes at her and cooperatively asked, "How did she try to seduce your older brother?"

Liang Yu Rong had stomach full of words she had been waiting to say to her. Now that she asked, she naturally didn't hide anything from her. She systematically narrated the story in full details, "Yesterday was my father's birthday banquet. My older brother was in very good mood and had drank a lot at the urgings of other people..."

Although Liang Yu was tall and valiant, his alcohol tolerance wasn't very good. After he had continuously drunk several cups of wine with the guests, he couldn't tolerate the alcohol well and felt muddle-headed. He bid everyone good-bye and prepared to go to his room to rest for a while. On the way to his room, he coincidentally met Xiang Xuan coming out of the bathroom.

Seeing that he was drunk and wasn't accompanied by servant boy, Xiang Xuan's mind inevitably turned to improper thoughts.

She approached him and with the excuse of helping him to his room, she followed him to his room.

After they went to his room, Liang Yu immediately lied down to sleep and wasn't aware of anything else. Seeing that he was unconscious, Xiang Xuan decided to take off her clothes and sleep next to him for a night. When other people discovered them the next morning, she could falsely accuse him of raping her and threaten him into taking responsibility for her.

Unexpectedly, when she had taken off half of her clothes, Liang Yu Rong had lead Marquis Ping Yuan's wife and several servant girls here and pushed open the door. She was caught red-handed!

Liang Yu was deeply asleep and properly dressed. She was awake and her clothes were disorderly. A single glance told them what was happening.

Liang Yu Rong couldn't help feeling indignant as she told her story. She angrily held a white porcelain cup with a lotus pattern as she said, "I didn't expected that such a proper-looking young lady would secretly act so base! If I didn't get there in time, my

older brother might have been forced to marry her!" She flattened her mouth. Her anger still hadn't faded. "Later, Prince Rui's people came. They continuously apologized to my parents and said they would properly discipline Xiang Xuan at home. Who knows if they would really discipline her? For the sake of my older brother's reputation, my parents were planning on hiding what had happened. I don't know who spread this news out, but after the birthday banquet, everyone already knew what had happened..."

Who spread out this news? Of course, it was Prince Rui's heir's wife, Xiang Wu.

Xiang Xuan seduced her own brother-in-law. Xiang Wu hated her to the bone. Since she didn't restrain herself and ruined her own reputation, Xiang Wu definitely wouldn't hide this information for her.

Anyways, after this matter, Xiang Xuan's reputation was completely destroyed. There probably wasn't any good family that would want her if she wanted to marry later. What family would want a woman that had ruined her reputation and lost her virginity? It would only bring shame to their family!

As a result, Liang Yu was able to escape from Xiang Xuan this lifetime.

## Chapter 81.2

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Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong talked for a while about other topics. In the end, seeing that it wasn't early, Wei Luo stood up to send Liang Yu Rong off.

The two of them walked outside. They hadn't been walking for long when they saw two people at Pine Courtyard's entrance.

They saw Wei Zheng first. She had meticulously dressed herself with a peach pink outer robe embroidered with colorful flowers and a pleated white skirt. There was a pair of jade birds in her hair. Behind her was Song Ru Wei. Song Rui Wei was Song Hui's younger sister. She was fifteen years old this year. She was wearing an autumn color robe with scattered flowers and her hair was arranged into two loops on the top of her head.

Since Song Hui had the appearance of a flawless immortal, then logically, as his younger sister, Song Ru Wei should also be an exceptional beauty. Unfortunately, she was a disappointment. Her face could only be considered delicate and pretty. Compared to an average girl, she was barely superior. But, when she was standing next to Song Hui, she immediately looked inferior to her older brother. But, her body type was pretty good. Although she was only fifteen years old, her body had already developed to match a seventeen or eighteen year old's. It made Wei Luo envious. Her chest was still faintly sore from developing.

Song Ru Wei had a good relationship with Wei Zheng. They were as close as sisters and often talked to each outside of public gatherings. So, it wasn't strange for Song Rui Wei to appear here.

The strange thing was that Song Hui was with them today.

Song Hui was wearing a silk, sapphire blue robe with a pattern of two lions. He looked tall and thin and his bearing was noble and proper. It seemed that Song Hui had brought them home. He had stopped at Pine Courtyard's entrance.

Wei Zheng turned around, smiled, and asked, "Older cousin Hui, would it be okay if older cousin Ru Wei stayed here overnight? I'll order people to send her back early tomorrow morning."

After considering for a moment, he nodded and said, "Then, I'll have to bother you with Ru Wei. I'll come over tomorrow morning to pick her up. I won't trouble young sister Ah Zheng with sending her back."

Wei Zheng nodded and the two of them said a few more words. Her smile had the charming attitude of a young girl. She looked most lovable in this moment. Seeing that Song Hui was walking away, she hurriedly stopped him by saying, "Older cousin, I'm going to go burn incense in worship at Baoci Temple with older cousin Ru Wei in a few days. Will you come with us?"

Song Hui stopped walking and didn't say anything.

Wei Zheng asked again, "Older cousin Hui, will you go?"

Before he had the chance to shake his head, Song Ru Wei, who understood her older brother the best, tried to persuade him, "Older brother, could you come with us? Baoci Temple is in the capital. It's not far from here. You already finished the court examination and you haven't been busy lately, right? You should go out and walk around to relax."

Their voices weren't loud, but they also weren't deliberately keeping quiet, so Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong could clearly hear their conversation from the verandah.

Wei Luo just remembered that Song Hui had taken the court examination a few days ago! During that time, she had been sick and Wei Chang Mi had been bothering her. She actually completely forgotten, much less asked him how his exam had went.

While Song Hui was thinking about a reply, he looked up and saw that Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong had walked down from the

verandah. His body froze for a moment. Soon after, he smiled and said to Song Ru Wei and Wei Zheng, "Ru Wei and younger sister Ah Zheng, go without me. I'll have Du Yu follow you two just in case you meet any danger."

Wei Zheng's face showed her regret and her heart felt disappointed. Seeing that he was looking somewhere else, she followed his gaze and her face immediately changed.

Wei Luo held up the edges of her skirt and leisurely walked to their side with Liang Yu Rong. With a well-behaved and lovable smile, she greeted them, "Older brother Song Hui, older cousin Ru Wei."

When Song Hui looked at her, his gaze showed a gentle desire to pamper that wasn't there when he had been looking at Wei Zheng and Song Rui Wei, "Younger sister Ah Luo."

Song Ru Wei was fairly polite. She nodded and said, "Younger sister Ah Luo."

They were all standing at the entrance. Although they were blocking it completely, it was still slightly inconvenient. Wei Luo tilted her head and casually asked, "I'm going to walk Yu Rong out. What about you two? It's not early. If you don't leave now, it'll be dark soon and it won't be easy to walk."

Although she didn't say much, Song Hui understood the meaning behind her words. He didn't want her to misunderstand, so he explained, "Ru Wei and younger sister Ah Zheng went to buy rouge together today. I coincidentally met them while they were shopping, so I brought them back here. I was just about to leave."

Wei Luo pursed her lips and faintly smiled, "Why is older brother Song Hui telling me this? Should I be concerned with who you decide to bring back here?"

Song Hui realized that he had been too impulsively. He also smiled and said, "Younger sister Ah Luo is right. My words were



wrong."

On the side, Wei Zheng didn't say anything, but she tightened her hold on the silk handkerchief inside her sleeve.

Wei Luo didn't stay here for long. After saying a few words with Song Hui, she left Pine Courtyard with Liang Yu Rong without looking back.

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During the next few days, Duke Ying's residence was very peaceful.

After Wei Luo fully recovered from her cold, she wasn't idle. In the morning, she went over to Mister Xue's to listen to his lectures. In the afternoon, she went over to Han-shi's to fiddle with perfumes and other fragrances and learn etiquette. If she still had free time in the evening, she would talk a bit with Wei Chang Hong. Her days were fairly fulfilled.

She hadn't forgotten what she had promised Zhao Jie. She would seriously consider their relationship. When she had free time, she couldn't help thinking about their previous conversations and interactions. As she thought about this, the ball of thread in her heart seemed to get messier and messier until it had completely wrapped up heart. Her mind was filled with thoughts about him. The more she thought, the more chaotic her mind became.

Without her noticing, over a month had passed. The temperature had become hotter.

Today, a carriage came to Duke Ying's residence to bring her to palace at the request of Zhao Liuli.

Wei Luo didn't have any suspicious. She changed into a thin summer yellow top, a green skirt embroidered with an eight treasures pattern in golden thread, and hu tou shoes. She led Jin Lu and Bai Lan out of the Duke Ying's residence and into the green canopy carriage that had stopped outside of the entrance.

The carriage slowly departed and moved forward.

She thought she was only going to meet Zhao Liuli, so she wore thinner, more refreshing clothing that wouldn't be suitable if she was meeting an elder. Even so, she still felt it was very hot. Summer had just started. She didn't know how she would survive the hottest period of summer from mid-July to mid-August.

Jin Lu and Bai Lan were holding ivory fans and fanning her. Soon, the carriage stopped.

Jin Lu asked in confusion, "This is strange. Why did we arrive so quickly today? It usually takes half an hour to enter the palace. Today, it only took fifteen minutes."

Wei Luo also felt doubtful. She held Bai Lan's hand as lifted up the carriage's curtain that was embroidered with golden thread and stepped down from the carriage. As she stood at the side of the carriage, she saw the residence in front of her and was stunned.

There were vermillion lacquered doors and two magnificent stone lions in front of the doors. The doors were open and she could see the vermillion roof tiles inside the residence.

When she looked up, she saw the three words majestically and horizontally inscribed on the board, Prince Jing's residence.

This was Zhao Jie's residence. She hadn't come to this place in a long time. She only remembered coming here when she was a child.

But, why did the carriage driver bring her here?

Prince Jing's residence's doors were open. Had Zhao Jie already returned? Was Zhao Liuli looking for her or did he... use Liuli's name to meet her?

Thinking of this, Wei Luo retreated half a step. Just as she was about turn around, go inside the carriage, and order the carriage driver to bring her back to Duke Ying's residence, she suddenly saw Zhao Liuli coming out from the inner part of the residence.

Zhao Liuli was holding her skirt as she arrived in front of Wei Luo. Seeing that she was about to leave, she hurriedly grabbed her. While crying, she persuaded her to stay, "Ah Luo, don't go. Don't be mad... I didn't lie to you intentionally. My older brother came back today. He's injured and currently resting inside. Come inside to visit him!"

## Chapter 82

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He was injured?

Wei Luo's steps slowed before she stopped walking.

Zhao Jie had gone to Shanxi to help with the disaster relief. It wasn't like he had gone to a border station that had barbarians and bandits. Why was he injured? She hesitated for a moment. It was only a moment, but Zhao Liuli saw this and took the opportunity to bring her inside Prince Jing's residence. As they walked, Zhao Liuli explained, "My older brother was ambushed on the way back. Someone wanted to take his life. Both his chest and shoulder have wounds. The doctor is currently staunching his bleeding..."

Prince Jing's residence was located in the capital's Southwest's Sheng Ye subdivision. Only high officials and nobles lived here. There weren't many pedestrians on the clean road, so Zhao Liuli's voice was especially distinct.

Zhao Liuli pulled Wei Luo into Prince Jing's residence. They took a small limestone-path to the back of the residence. At first, she didn't really believe Zhao Liuli's words, but Zhao Liuli's tears didn't seem fake. In addition, as they walked closer to Zhao Jie's personal courtyard, she saw more servants hurriedly coming and going. They seemed to all be busy with one thing. Wei Luo's heart gradually sunk. Even if she didn't want to, she had to start believing that Zhao Liuli's words were true.

Zhao Liuli's eyes were red. She wiped away her tears and said, "When I was looking before, the wound was deep and long. There was blood everywhere on older brother's body... He doesn't want imperial mother to worry and only told me. But, imperial mother will know sooner or later... Ah Luo, don't blame me for asking you to come here. I know about the matter between you and my older brother. My older brother likes you. He'll be really happy even if you only come to look at him."

Wei Luo pursed her lips. A long time later, she said, "... If this happens again in the future, you have to tell me in advance."

This was related to a young lady's pure reputation. Zhao Liuli's actions were really improper. Wei Luo would treat this time as Liuli not thinking clearly because she was too worried and decided that she wouldn't argue with her about this.

Zhao Liuli repeatedly nodded. She didn't know if Wei Luo would listen to her earlier words. After taking another two steps, she said, "Let's walk faster. My older brother's personal courtyard is right in front."

At Jin Courtyard, the servants were hurriedly entering and exiting. Just as Zhao Liuli and Wei Luo walked to the entrance, they saw a young servant carrying out a basin of bloody water from inside. Seeing them, she quickly saluted, "Your Highness..."

Seeing the basin of bloody water, Zhao Liuli's face immediately paled and she nervously asked, "How's my older brother?"

The young servant girl was eleven years old. Her hair was combed into two buns and she was wearing an aquamarine robe. She attentively and respectfully said, "The doctor has already stopped Prince Jing's bleeding. He's currently wrapping his wounds..."

Hearing this, Zhao Liuli went around her and led Wei Luo into Zhao Jie's inner room.

Seeing the bloody water in front of her and not knowing the way, Wei Luo followed her inside.

There weren't many people in the inner room. There was only Zhu Geng and two doctors. Zhao Jie had probably driven out the other people. The two young girls went around the divider screen made of twelve pieces of sandalwood decorated with plum flowers, bamboo, and pine trees.

Zhao Liuli impatiently asked, "Older brother Zhu, is my older

brother awake?"

Zhu Geng didn't need to reply to her question. Zhao Jie was sitting on black lacquered bed carved with spirals. His upper body was bare and showed his excellently strong chest. The white beard doctor was wrapping layers of bandages around his wound. The wound on his left shoulder was already wrapped up in thin, white silk. She couldn't tell how serious his injury was. However, the wound on his left arm was still exposed to the air. She could clearly see that the wound was as deep and long as Zhao Liuli had said.

His wounded skin and flesh were exposed. Although the bleeding had stopped, it was still a ghastly site.

Wei Luo stood in place and stared at him. She didn't continue walking forward.

Zhao Jie had been injured and lost an excessive amount of blood, so his face was very pale. Even so, he remained calm. He lifted his head and looked at her. His thin lips were smiling. After looking at her for a long time, he didn't care that there were outsiders here, he stretched out his uninjured arm and greeted her, "Come here, let this prince see how you've changed during this month."

He had already been hurt like this and he was still thinking about teasing her.

Wei Luo pursed her lips and didn't move.

She didn't move and he didn't force her to come closer. While the doctor at his side continued to wrap thin, white silk around him, Zhao Jie settled his gaze on her. His dark eyes were smiling as if he didn't feel the slightest pain.

Not much later, the doctor finished wrapping the final layer of bandages. Before he tactfully retreated, he said, "After the prescription is written, this old one will hand the prescription over to Imperial Bodyguard Zhu. Prince, please drink this medicine in the morning and evening. After ten days, I'll change the

prescription."

Zhao Jie finally looked away from her. Without showing his feelings, he nodded and said to Zhu Geng, "Leave with the two doctors. After you get the prescription, have the servants prepare the medicine and deliver it to this prince."

Zhu Geng acknowledged his order and led the two doctors out of the inner room.

Zhao Liuli was at his beside. Seeing that the situation wasn't right, she quickly reacted. She smiled and said, "I'll go see what medicine they need. I have a lot of rare medicine at my place. If imperial brother needs it, I'll have older brother Yang Zhen bring it over." Then, she turned around, passed Wei Luo, and left the room.

A moment later, the room was only left with Wei Luo and Zhao Jie.

Wei Luo knew that Zhao Liuli had done this intentionally. After complaining about Liuli in her mind, she lifted her head to look at Zhao Jie on his bed and quickly looked away, "Older brother Prince Jing, you should put on your clothes. I'll talk with you later."

Because his wounds had just finished being bandaged, Zhao Jie's upper body was exposed at this time.

He didn't have a scholar's body. It was a tall body that had become strong and hard through experience and training, even his stomach had toned muscles. Wei Luo hadn't seen a man's body before. After Chang Hong grew up, she had rarely seen him without his clothing. Now, Zhao Jie was half naked and sitting in front of her. She really couldn't adapt to this sight.

Zhao Jie didn't make things difficult for her. He nodded, then he said, "My clothes are in the cabinet behind you. It's not convenient for me to leave my bed. Ah Luo, could you bring it over to me?"

To be honest, Wei Luo really wanted to turn around and leave.

It was so improper for a lone man and a lone woman to be inside a room without a definite relationship. But, after hesitating for a moment, on behalf of his injuries, she wouldn't focus too much about this. Under distress, she decided to bring his clothes to him.

Wei Luo turned around and walked to the cabinet. She selected a sapphire blue robe with a persimmon stem pattern from the cabinet, brought it to him, and said, "Here."

But, Zhao Jie didn't accept the clothing. He raised his eyebrow and his enigmatic dark eyes enticingly looked at her. Neither quickly nor slowly, his lips curved into a smile.

Wei Luo instantly had a bad feeling.

As expected, he took advantage of this opportunity to grab her hand and bring her into his embrace. Then, he quickly pressed her down into the bed.

The sky and earth spun. Before Wei Luo had time to recover and react, Zhao Jie took unfair advantage and came on top of her. He whispered into her ear, "Dearest, have you finished thinking? Do you want to marry this prince?"



## Chapter 83.1

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The bedplate wasn't hard. It was covered with layer of light blue satin bedding with gold embroidery and a pattern of okra flowers, chrysanthemum, and butterflies. Lying on the top of the bedding that was soft as clouds, Wei Luo could even smell a trace of blood. It was probably the blood from Zhao Jie's wounds that had been inadvertently left behind when the doctor was staunching his wounds.

He was already injured to this point. He still had energy to think about other thoughts?

Wei Luo felt very incredulous.

She blinked in astonishment. Her bright, black eyes were like two pools of shining water. She finally couldn't resist lifting her hand, touching his wound on his chest, and curiously asking, "Does this not hurt?"

Although she didn't clearly see this wound when she came inside, she could guess that this injury wasn't light from the paleness of his face. Since this was true, why did he still have the energy to push her down and ask her this question? Shouldn't he be more concern about his injuries?

Zhao Jie held her soft, little hand and didn't allow her to touch his wound. He rubbed her cheek, then he quietly said, "Answer my question."

That movement had pulled at his wounds. An action that was usually very easy to do was now very difficult. His chest continued to dully ache. The wound that had recently stopped bleeding started again. However, this pain cleared his head and let him remember the promise she had made. His little girl had said she would tell him the answer after he came back from Shanxi. He was back now and he was impatient to hear her answer.

Because he wanted to hear her answer too much, he kept thinking about her while he was in Shanxi.

Emperor Chong Zhen had been merciful and distributed five million silver to help with the disaster relief. When Zhao Jie reached Shanxi, he saw that the people had no way of making a living and the area was swarming with disaster victims. The common people only had bitter words left.

When they heard the emperor had sent Prince Jing here, everyone worshiped Zhao Jie as a god and devoutly kowtowed. They weren't this respectful and grateful towards their own biological parents. The disaster relief went very well. The local officials were also very accommodating and didn't use their official authority for private interest. Of course, most of this was because of Prince Jing's reputation.

Everyone knew that Prince Jing was very cruel and unreasonable. In addition, he had a noble identity. Who would be blind enough to dare to provoke him?

He had gotten this new injury on the way back to the capital from Shanxi.

Someone knew in advance the path he would take back to the capital, laid out an ambush fifty miles outside of the capital, and attempted to take his life. The other party had come prepared with forty to fifty merciless and highly skilled people. Unfortunately, they had underestimated Zhao Jie's skill and precautionary mind.

On the surface, Zhao Jie didn't bring many people with him. But, in reality, most of his guards were hidden. The guards had high levels of martial arts skills and performed impressively. They were more than enough to deal with these people. Although the other side had more people, they weren't able to take the slightest advantage and were utterly defeated by Zhao Jie's guards. They either died or suffered serious injuries.

To beat them at their own game, Zhao Jie had taken two strikes

during this time. Those were the two spots where he was currently injured. One was on his left chest and the other was on his left arm.

Zhao Jie had already guessed who instigated this. At the end, he ordered his people to not allow even one person to live. Several corpses were put on display in the wilderness.

He hadn't tried to hide the news of his injuries, so that the person behind the scene would relax their vigilance. He wanted to see. During this time, while he was injured, what great winds and high waves would they cause?

Unfortunately, he hadn't control the depth of the injuries well. The wounds were too deep. He didn't even have to pretend to be a seriously injured person.

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Wei Luo felt that there was something wrong with his condition. She couldn't help tilting her head and looking at him. His lips had turned pale. There was sweat on his forehead. He seemed very weak. Her heart pumped and she tried to burrow out from underneath him. "Big brother, you should properly lie down. Recuperate from your injuries first, then we'll talk, okay?"

He didn't move. It felt as if his entire weight was pressing down on her. One hand held her little hand and the other hand was partially propping himself up. His breath was hot and heavy, "Then promise me and I'll properly lie down."

His body was already so delirious and he was actually acting so rascally.

Wei Luo took her hand out of his hand, lightly pressed against an uninjured part of his body with both of her hands, and burrowed out from underneath him. He was currently injured and weak, so it was easier to break away from him compared to before.

Wei Luo stood next to his bed and looked at him. A small amount

of blood had appeared on his white bandages. His wound had probably opened again. She didn't know why, but she was slightly angry. If he wasn't injured, she really wanted to storm off and leave him! "If big brother doesn't properly care for his injuries, I won't promise."

He quickly figured out the omission in her words. He opened his deep, phoenix eyes wider and directly looked at her, "If I properly take care of my injuries until they heal, will you marry me?"

Wei Luo finally understood! He was using his injured body to force her heart to soften and coerce her, so that she would agree.

Standing at his bed, Wei Luo suddenly realized something.

She had thought about this for a month and still wasn't sure. Now, after seeing him, the clouds were gone and she could see the sun. Everything was clear. If her heart didn't have him, why would her heart feel as if something was squeezing it when she saw him injured? Why would she worry over him? Why would she feel distressed? If it were someone else casually touching, kissing, and hugging her, she would have retaliated a long time ago. He had relied on her tolerance of him to do intimate things between men and women.

So shameless.

She couldn't help silently cursing at him. The little girl's face didn't show her tremulous thoughts and unspoken criticism. In a short amount of time, she had already thought everything through.

She was still engaged to Song Hui. After she turned fourteen years old next month, their families would start planning their wedding. She could only be with Zhao Jie without worries after she settled the problem of her engagement with Song Hui. Besides, a girl should be a little bit more reserved. If he easily succeeded obtained her, wouldn't that be letting him off too easily?

Han-shi had once talked to her about the relationships between men and women. Although the most important thing was mutual consent, a woman should play some small tricks at the appropriate time. Han-shi had become accustomed to seeing the various ways the concubines and consorts would use to gain favor and had spent a lot of time studying this. Han-shi had also said that person who could win a man's heart was the one who had the most superior methods.

Wei Luo didn't want to try these methods on Zhao Jie. He genuinely liked her. She didn't want their relationship to consist of them scheming against each other. Although Han-shi had told her various ways to grasp a man's heart, she didn't intend to use a single method on Zhao Jie.

But, at the current moment, she had just gained clarity of her feelings, so she didn't want to admit it so quickly.

Zhao Jie couldn't wait to hear her reply. He reached out to hold her hand that was at her side, "Ah Luo, answer me."

## Chapter 83.2

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Wei Luo tried to pull her hand away, but didn't succeed. It was so strange. He was already injured, how did he have the strength to grab her hand? Her pink lips pursed. Her little arrogant manner was both lovable and dislikable, "I didn't say that. If big brother can't recover from his injuries, how can you come to my house to propose marriage? My daddy and Chang Hong definitely wouldn't agree to me marrying an invalid."

She said he was an invalid. The blue veins on Zhao Jie's forehead bulged. This was related to a man's dignity. She shouldn't casually slander it. However, after thinking, he had second thoughts. She was willing to let him go to Duke Ying's residence to propose marriage. Didn't this mean she was agreeing?

A smile appeared in Zhao Jie's dark eyes. His thin lips couldn't resist jumping up again and again into a smile. He held the little girl's hand and didn't loosen his hold for a long time. He slowly and quietly said, "Okay, this prince will properly recuperate. When its time, I'll come to Duke Ying's residence to propose marriage."

His eyes were too gentle and contained affection that was too heavy. Wei Luo couldn't bear seeing it. She wasn't used to it. She turned her head and said, "If there's nothing else, I'm leaving."

Zhao Jie looked at her and didn't seem to have the intention of letting her go, "Stay here and talk with this prince for a bit."

But, what was there to say? He was currently injured. The doctor had already said he should be resting. Wouldn't talking waste his energy? Wei Luo stared at him. She opened and closed her mouth. Just as she was about to speak, Zhao Liuli walked out from behind the divider screen that was made of twelve red sandalwood panels.

Liuli's eyes landed on Zhao Jie's hand holding Wei Luo's hand. She stopped walking, slightly embarrassedly smiled, and said to Zhao Jie, "Imperial older brother... I came here to say that

imperial mother has come. She also brought older cousin Dan Yang."

Wei Luo subconsciously took back her hand.

It wasn't because she had a guilty conscience. It was only that things hadn't taken shaped yet, so she didn't want Empress Chen to misunderstand her.

Zhao Jie's hand was suddenly empty. The emotion on his face couldn't be clearly seen. He furrowed his eyebrows and said, "Why did Gao Dan Yang come here?"

Zhao Liuli looked at Wei Luo, then she innocently looked at him. "I don't know either... It's probably because she heard that you were injured, so she came here to see you..."

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A little while later, from Jin courtyard's verandah, as expected, Gao Dan Yang could be seen supporting Empress Chen with one hand as they hurriedly walked over here.

When Empress Chen found out that her son had been injured, she couldn't care about anything else. She stopped what she was currently working on and immediately left the palace to come visit him. At that time, Gao Dan Yang was coincidentally at her side. Hearing that Zhao Jie was injured, she was very concerned and earnestly asked Empress Chen to bring her along. Empress Chen thought they were very close as children and were childhood sweethearts, so she agreed.

Empress Chen didn't have time to change her clothes. She was dressed in red top embroidered with a hundred good luck symbols and an imperial jade green skirt with dragons and clouds. She looked luxurious and graceful. Because she was worried, her usual calmness had been replaced with franticness. Next to her, Gao Dan Yang was wearing an entirely cochineal red summer robe with golden embroidery. Although Gao Dan Yang looked calm, the hand

inside her sleeve was tightly clenched. She seemed very worried about Zhao Jie.

The two of them walked closer. Zhao Liuli and Wei Luo came forward and saluted.

Zhao Liuli said, "Imperial mother..."

Empress Chen couldn't care about anything else and interrupted her, "How's Chang Sheng?"

She replied, "The doctor has seen older brother, stopped the bleeding, and bandaged the wounds. It's not too dangerous anymore." Having lingering fears, she added, "Imperial mother, you don't know. Older brother was bleeding so much before... I was so scared that my tears came out..."

Hearing that he was past the danger period, Empress Chen let out a sigh in relief. Originally, she wanted to go inside to look, but her eyes landed on Wei Luo. She curiously asked, "Ah Luo, why are you also here?"

Zhao Liuli had already thought of a reason. She pulled Wei Luo's hand and said, "Originally, I was with Wei Luo. When I heard that older brother was injured, I was too worried and didn't think about sending Wei Luo back home first, so she came here with me." Then, she added, "Fortunately, older brother's injuries weren't a big deal. I'll send Ah Luo home soon."

Empress Chen nodded. Her heart was worried about Zhao Jie's injuries, so she didn't think any further or ask any other question. She resumed walking to Zhao Jie's inner room.

Gao Dan Yang followed behind her. When she passed Wei Luo, she couldn't help looking at her for an extra moment.

Wei Luo noticed her gaze. She curved her lips and faintly smiled, "Older sister Gao."

She smiled back and said, "Young sister Ah Luo." She didn't say anymore before turning around and walking into Zhao Jie's inner



room.

Inside the inner room, Empress Chen had arrived at his bedside.

At this time, Zhao Jie had already finished putting on his clothes. It was the clothing that Wei Luo had selected for him. He was leaning against his bed and looking through the window at something.

Seeing that his face was pale and weak, Empress Chen's eyes started to become teary. She sat down on his bed and asked, "What happened? Didn't you say everything was fine in Shanxi? Why did you come back with injuries?"

He looked away from the window, his lips slightly bent, and he quietly said, "They're only small injuries. It's not important. Imperial mother, don't worry."

How could Empress Chen not worry? She only had one son and he wasn't married. What would she do if an unfortunate accident occurred? She took out her silk handkerchief, wiped away her tears, and asked, "Who did this? Have you found out who was behind this attack?"

Zhao Jie didn't want to say too much, "Not yet."

However, even if he didn't say, Empress Chen still knew. She had already experienced being sneakily attacked during the struggle for power. Zhao Jie's injuries were definitely related to Zhao Zhang. Her face was ugly, but it wouldn't be good for her to interfere. Zhao Jie had his own thoughts and methods. If she interfered, it might ruin his plans instead of helping him.

Thinking of this, Empress Chen could only calm down the anger in her heart. Instead of continuing to ask about this, she attentively expressed her concerns about his injuries.

There wasn't a woman at Zhao Jie's side to care for him or inquire after his health. Empress Chen was very worried about this aspect. She long-windedly said, "You have to carefully remember

the words the doctor said. Don't try to be brave. It's more important to properly care for your injuries. Put everything to the side for now..." She sighed and said, "If you were married, I wouldn't have to worry this much."

Zhao Jie couldn't help thinking of that little girl and his lips curved into a faint smile.

If he married her, what would their life be like? Before her, he wasn't interest in getting married. It was only towards her as marriage partner that his thoughts were completely different.

When he was with her, every moment was a delight.

Seeing that he showed a trace of a smile instead of displeasure at the mention of marriage, Empress Chen suddenly felt a little bit of hope. She called Gao Dan Yang to her side, "Today, Dan Yang had entered the palace to keep me company. As soon as she heard you were injured, she was extremely nervous and insisted on coming here to see you. So, this empress brought her here."

Gao Dan Yang stood next to his bed. After Empress Chens aid these words about her, she embarrassedly smiled and looked at him as she said, "I'm relieved that older cousin Jing is okay."

Then, servant girls came inside with medicine. They saluted Empress Chen and said, "Your Majesty, His Highness Prince Jing's medicine has been prepared."

Hearing this and looking at Zhao Jie's injured arm, she stood up to give up her spot at his bedside and said, "The past few days have been cold. This empress's elbow has been feeling a bit painful. Dan Yang, come here, help your older cousin Prince Jing drink his medicine."

Although Gao Dan Yang's heart was happy, her face only showed shyness, "Maternal aunt, this wouldn't be too good..."

Just as Empress Chen was about to say something, Zhao Jie's smile disappeared and he coldly said, "No need, this prince can

drink the medicine by myself.”

The expression he had when he was refusing was a thousand miles apart from the gentle and patient expression he had when he was looking at Wei Luo.

Gao Dan Yang helplessly looked at Empress Chen.

The atmosphere in the inner room was very stiff. Zhao Liuli suddenly came out from behind the divider screen. She looked at everyone and said, "Imperial mother and brother, if there's nothing else, I'm going to send Ah Luo home."

Wei Luo was standing behind her. She didn't look at Zhao Jie. Instead she looked at the celadon medicine bowl with a lotus pattern that Gao Dan Yang was holding. She blinked and seemed to be thinking about something.

## Chapter 84

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At this time, Wei Luo finally understood where Gao Dan Yang's unwarranted hostility came from.

A woman's intuition was always very accurate. These two weren't an exception. Her relationship with Zhao Jie was too close. It was normal for Gao Dan Yang to be guarded against her. After all, this young woman was using the best of her beautiful, youthful years waiting for this man, so it was natural for her to pay closer attention to him. Any girl that appeared at his side might become her enemy.

Back then, Wei Luo didn't understand. She only vaguely felt that Gao Dan Yang didn't like her. Now, she understood that it was because she also liked Zhao Jie.

No wonder every time they met, Gao Dan Yang would mention Zhao Jie and their childhood as if that was something only the two of them knew about and no one else could be part of. So, she had been secretly calling to her attention that they were a perfectly matched pair of childhood sweethearts.

Wei Luo though this was slightly laughable. This behavior was too naive. It was like a little child snatching her favorite toy. She thinks that if she closely holds the toy, then it's hers. She didn't realize that the toy was only borrowed. The memory was false. She never truly had it.

Wei Luo controlled herself, put away the glimmer of realization in her eyes, and walked forward to salute Empress Chen.

Empress Chen nodded, didn't urge her to stay, and good-naturedly said, "That's good. Liluli will send Ah Luo to the entrance."

Zhao Liuli agreed, held Wei Luo's hand, and was just about to leave with her. On the side, Gao Dan Yang put down the bowl of

medicine and said, "Liuli's health isn't good. How about I send House Wei's Fourth Miss off?"

Wei Luo slightly paused, tilted her head, and looked at her.

Empress Chen thought of the previous awkward scene and wanted to ease the tension. If Gao Dan Yang sent Wei Luo off, then she would have the chance to talk to Zhao Jie privately, so she agreed, "Then you go. Is there a carriage at the entrance? If there isn't, Ah Luo can use this empress's carriage to return home."

Using Empress Chen's carriage, this was a rare honor. It could be seen that Empress Chen greatly favored Wei Luo. Gao Dan Yang's face froze and she forced herself to smile and say, "Okay, everything will be done as maternal aunt's said."

Then, she went Wei Luo's side and said, "Younger sister Ah Luo, let's go."

Wei Luo's gaze swept over the bed without lingering. In the end, her gaze stopped at Gao Dang Yang and she politely said, "Then, I'll have to trouble older sister Gao."

The two of them left the inner room and their figures gradually disappeared.

Zhao Jie's gaze stopped at the divider screen. His dark eyes were deep without any ripples. After looking over there for a moment, he looked away. On the side, disheartened, Empress Chen said, "Don't look. Dan Yang has already walked far away. If you wanted to look, why did you act that way before? You were so cold to her..."

His eyes turned and he lightly said, "Mother knows that I'm not looking at her."

Empress Chen was stifled by his words. If he wasn't looking at Gao Dan Yang, then who was he looking at? The flowers on the divider screen? Or, could it be that little girl Wei Luo? Although she was very pleased with Wei Luo, she still felt that she was too

young. She won't even mention that she hadn't had her hairpin ceremony yet. Wei Luo was nine years younger than Zhao Jie.

Could Zhao Jie like her? He didn't even like fifteen-year-old girls. That girl was even younger. It should be even more unlikely, right? When Wei Luo was recently here, she didn't seem him frequently looking over there at her.

Empress Chen couldn't help thinking that if Wei Luo were just a little bit older, this would be good. She already looked so beautiful at this young age. She was as lustrous as gems and her skin was better than pure snow. After two years, how beautiful would she become? Unfortunately, at that time, she would probably already be betrothed to someone. Zhao Jie wouldn't have a chance.

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Prince Jing's residence was very large. When she had just come in, she didn't carefully look. Now, while she was walking, she could see that it was a richly ornamented residence and sumptuous dwelling. When they arrived at the path lined by trees on both sides, the blazing sunlight projected down and laid down many shadows. It was very hot. Although the two of them were walking underneath the trees, they couldn't avoid sweating a thin layer.

Wei Luo was most afraid of heat. During last year's summer, she had hid in her room and prepared several basins of ice for cooling. Ice was expensive at this time of the year. Even so, Wei Kun was very willing to buy the ice to fill her basins. She had put the ice basins in her lattice doorway and worn only a thin, gauzy robe. It felt the best when she also drunk a bowl of cool pickled plum soup.

While thinking of this, Wei Luo impatiently wanted to return home.

In front of them, there was a fork in the road. Wei Luo remembered that Zhao Liuli had taken the left path here. Just as she was about to walk towards the left path, Gao Dan Yang stopped her, "That way is a small path and can be slightly crowded.

Younger sister Ah Luo, let's walk this way."

Wei Luo stopped. Either way was fine. She followed her on the right path.

The right path was wider, paved with limestone, and directly led to Prince Jing's residence's entrance. As Gao Dan Yang walked, she said, "Prince Jing's residence has a lot of different paths. I remember that when I came here as a child to play with older cousin Prince Jing, even though I had come here many times, I would still get lost..."

Because she recently figured out Gao Dan Yang's intentions, now that she was saying these words, Wei Luo immediately understood the meaning of her words.

Did she see that there was something between her and Zhao Jie? Or, was she simply taking precautionary measures?

Wei Luo felt this was very interesting. Originally, she didn't think there was anything between Zhao Jie and Gao Dan Yang. If Zhao Jie really liked her, he would have married her a long time ago. Why would he delay it until now? Some things should be clearly recognized when it was time. There wouldn't be a result even if she kept waiting.

Wei Luo's hands were behind her. Whatever Gao Dan Yang wanted to say, she would listen. She smiled and said, "Older sister Gao's memory is so good. That was so long ago and you still remember it so clearly."

There were too many hidden meanings behind these words. She said that she used to get lost because she didn't have a good memory. But, she still clearly remembered something from so long ago. Wasn't this self-contradictory? And she was always mentioning things from the past in front of Wei Luo. If her memory wasn't good, then it could only be that she was deliberately showing off.

Gao Dan Yang's smile stiffened. She didn't know if Wei Luo had said these words deliberately or not. She couldn't get a grasp on Wei Luo's attitude for some time now. She tilted her head and looked at her. The little girl had two dimples and her almond eyes were curved. In all details, she looked like an obedient and cute girl and didn't seem to be mocking her. Was she thinking too much?

Gao Dan Yang tidied up the expression on her face, ashamedly covered up her mouth, and said, "Look at me. I couldn't help myself once I started talking. I always mention past things. Younger sister Ah Luo, you must have been tired from hearing this, right? Let's talk about younger sister Ah Luo instead of this."

Prince Jing's residence's entrance wasn't far away. In a few steps, she could go home. Wei Luo was slightly careless. She didn't want to continue talking to her. She slowly said, "Oh... I... There's not much to say about me. What does older sister Gao want to know?"

She had only casually asked and hadn't expected that Gao Dan Yang would stop walking. It seemed that there really was something she wanted to ask.

She could only follow her action in stopping and turn around to look at her.

Gao Dan Yang twisted the silk handkerchief in her hand, looked at her, and faintly smiled, "I recently saw Marquis Ping Yuan's daughter. I heard that younger sister Ah Luo was engaged to Count Zhong Yi's eldest grandson when your mother was pregnant?"

(T/N: In the actual raw text, it said "I heard that younger sister Ah Luo was engaged to Marquis Ping Yuan's eldest son when your mother was pregnant?" I assume it was a typo.)

Wei Luo seemingly realized something and didn't comment.

So she wanted to ask about this. Since Gao Dan Yang was mentioning this at this time, she could guess her next words.

As expected, after Gao Dan Yang deliberated her words, she



continued, "Since younger sister Ah Luo is already engaged, you have to be more aware. You're not young anymore. You have to be more concerned about your reputation. It would be better if you don't come to Prince Jing's residence in the future."

# Chapter 85.1

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A long time after Gao Dan Yang said this, Wei Luo didn't show any reaction.

"Younger sister Ah Luo?" She called out.

Wei Luo looked up with her shining dark eyes, blinked, and uncertainly said, "En."

This sound was sweet and agreeable. The languid and charming sound would enter a person's bones. Even as a woman, Gao Dan Yang had to admit that hearing this sound softened her heart. She looked at the young girl's beautiful face with her soft cheeks and exquisite skin that was snow white and almost transparent underneath the sunlight. In all details, she was so beautiful that poems would be composed about her. She was an exquisite figurine that looked as delicate as flowers. Naturally, Gao Dan Yang's appearance wasn't bad. But, in front of her, she didn't have the slightest advantage.

If Zhao Jie liked Wei Luo, she wasn't sure about her odds of success.

Thinking of this, Gao Dan Yang's mood sunk. She pursed her lips, smiled, and slowly said, "Does younger sister Ah Luo understand the words I just said? I know that younger sister Ah Luo is a well-behaved girl in your words and actions. It's only that older cousin Jing hasn't married yet. It would best to avoid doing anything that would arouse suspicion. It wouldn't be good if someone misunderstands."

Hearing this, Wei Luo slowly and deliberately nodded as if she rather agreed with her words, "Older sister Gao's words are logical. I rarely come to Prince Jing's residence. If it weren't for Liuli, I probably wouldn't have come here today. Besides, unlike older sister Gao who's familiar with everything here, I'm not even familiar with these paths." Then she curved her limpid eyes and

politely said, "Older sister Gao, thank you for your guidance today. If there's nothing else, I'll be going home."

Gao Dan Yang almost couldn't keep the smile on her face. With great difficulty, she said, "Then, I won't continue to send you off. Younger sister Ah Luo, be careful on the way home."

She had just recently said that it wouldn't be good for Wei Luo to come to Prince Jing's residence. In the blink of an eye, Wei Luo had praised her for being familiar with this place. Wasn't she taunting her?

Gao Dan Yang wanted to see traces of ridicule on Wei Luo's face, but she was disappointed. The little girl was smiling generously without the slightest trace of judgment, flaw, or guilty conscious. Because Wei Luo's smile was magnanimous, she felt even more unbearable.

She kept warning the other person, but the other person didn't take her seriously. Instead, she was thought of as a narrow-minded person.

Gao Dan Yang watched Wei Luo going into the carriage, then she turned around and walked back into Prince Jing's residence.

Inside Jin Courtyard, Zhao Jie had just finished drinking a bowl of medicine. He was sitting on his bed and listening to Empress Chen garrulously talking about what he should do to recuperate from his injury.

Gao Dan Yang walked into the inner room and saluted Empress Chen and Zhao Jie, "Maternal aunt, older brother Prince Jing."

Empress Chen turned to look at her and said she could rise. "Has Ah Luo left?"

Gao Dan Yang nodded and walked to Empress Chen's side. "She left. I personally led younger sister Ah Luo to the entrance and saw her going into the carriage."

This being the case, Empress Chen was reassured.

Empress Chen thought of her conversation with Zhao Jie and started to open her mouth. She wanted to properly talk with Gao Dan Yang, but in the end, she choked down those words. She had watched Gao Dan Yang grow up and was clear about her temperament. She was an understanding, well-educated, and filial daughter. Originally, she had wanted to match her and Zhao Jie together. When they were still children, she had already talked about this with Duke Zhen's wife and she had agreed.

She didn't expect that as these children grew up, Zhao Jie still didn't have any interest in Gao Dan Yang. No matter how she tried to persuade him, he wouldn't agree.

Now, these two people were grown up. One had the intention and the other didn't. It wouldn't okay to keep delaying this. Since Zhao Jie wasn't willing to marry her, then she couldn't let Gao Dan Yang keep waiting. As a twenty-year-old woman, she was considered old. But, with her and Duke Zhen's abilities, it wouldn't be difficult to find her a good marriage partner.

But, how should she start? She had clearly tried to act as their matchmaker a moment ago. She couldn't persuade her to give up in the next moment.

Empress Chen didn't feel comfortable saying anything, but Zhao Jie didn't have any scruples.

Gao Dan Yang took the small, brightly colored cup from a servant girl and brought it to Zhao Jie. She said, "Older cousin, drink this tea to get rid of the bitter taste in your mouth."

Zhao Jie's hands were placed on the light blue brocade blanket. He didn't take the cup. His eyebrows were lowered and in an estranged and detached tone, he said, "Dan Yang, if there's nothing important, it would best if you don't come to Prince Jing's residence."

Caught unprepared, Gao Dan Yang's hand that was holding the teacup shook. She looked at him and asked, "Older brother Jing,

why are you saying this? Have I done something wrong to make you angry at me?"

He said she hadn't. His following few words broke all of her fantasies, "Men and women should maintain a distance from each other. I'm doing this in considering for your reputation."

She stiffened and the words "karmic retribution within one's lifetime" flashed through her mind.

She had just said the same type of words to Wei Luo. In a blink of an eye, Zhao Jie had returned these words to her! He said that men and women should maintain a distance from each other. These few words clearly severed their relationship and broke her heart. Didn't he know that she had been waiting for him this entire time? Why was he saying this now? Was he telling her to not wait anymore?

Gao Dan Yang forced herself to smile, "Older cousin..."

Zhao Jie didn't wait for her to finish her words. He coldly interrupted her, "You're not young anymore. You should agree to a marriage soon. I recently talked to imperial mother about this. She'll help you with finding someone."

Gao Dan Yang's face paled. Her heart turned into ashes. She looked at him, then she looked at Empress Chen. She probably felt ashamed. She had waited for him for so many years, but he was going to push her to another man. This was entirely her fault for showering affection on an uninterested party. She thought of the words that she had just said to Wei Luo and her face turned red. She felt ashamed and disgraced. Her eyes turned red. She put the small, bright tea cup down on the table next to the bed, then she turned around and ran out!

## Chapter 85.2

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Empress Chen was worried that Gao Dan Yang would become too depressed and do a foolish thing. She stood up and chased after her.

Fortunately, she hadn't run far. She had stopped next to one of the verandah's pillars. Her head was lowered and she was wiping away her tears. Empress Chen gestured for the servants to leave, walked forward, patted her shoulders, and said, "Dan Yang, Jie-er's words weren't without reasoning... He's thinking for you. You're twenty years old this year. Most girls your age are already married and have children. You have to think about your marriage..."

Gao Dan Yang cried broken-heartedly. Soon, her entire face was covered in tears. She turned her around and threw herself into Empress Chen's chest like a helpless little girl. "Maternal aunt, other people don't know. But, shouldn't you clearly know... Why did I wait until now? Isn't it because... Because..."

Empress Chen's felt bad for her. She patted her back and comforted her, "Maternal aunt knows. Of course, maternal aunt understands." Because Empress Chen clearly understood, she felt even more depressed. She didn't want to hurt her. She could only softly say, "But you know Jie-er's temperament. He knows exactly what he wants and doesn't want. If he wants something, he wouldn't wait. No matter what, he'll obtain it. If he doesn't want something, even if you forcefully push it to him, he won't have the slightest interest. Dan Yang, I know you truly love him. But, this can't be forced. Carefully think about this, once you figure it out, tell maternal aunt. Maternal aunt will help you select a husband. Regardless if it's a man from an aristocrat family or the imperial family, maternal aunt will fulfill your choice."

This type of thing, could it be gotten over in a short period of time?

If she could get over him so easily, then she wouldn't have waited several years for him.

Gao Dan Yang suddenly thought of something, looked up from Empress Chen's chest, wiped her tears, and asked, "Maternal aunt, why did older cousin Prince suddenly tell me this? Did he find someone that he likes?"

Empress Chen shook her head, sighed, and said, "If he did, I wouldn't be anxious."

She had recently asked Zhao Jie this question. Zhao Jie didn't say anything, so she had assumed it was still the same answer as before.

He wasn't young anymore. He didn't have anyone that he liked and he wouldn't marry his childhood sweetheart. What did he want to do? Empress Chen felt very helpless towards him. She thought that the day she would be able to hold her grandson was in the far, indefinite future. She didn't know how long she would have to wait.

She thought of Duke Ding's young grandson with his white and tender little face. He was as lovely as white snow. When Empress Chen met him, that little fellow would giggle whenever he saw anyone. She felt so envious when she saw him. If she had a grandson, he would also be very lovable. But, she didn't know when Zhao Jie would marry and have a child to continue their family line.

Hearing this, Gao Dan Yang's cries gradually faded.

If he didn't have anyone that he liked, then she still had hope. Regardless of Zhao Jie's feelings towards Wei Luo, since he hadn't mentioned Wei Luo yet, then he didn't have the intention of marrying her at the moment.

As long as Zhao Jie didn't marry Wei Luo, she wouldn't give up hope.

She had already waited for so long. Asking her to change her feelings in a short period of time, how could she be willing? While she thought this, on the surface, she continued to look brokenheartedly and helpless. She looked down and said, "I'll properly considered maternal aunt's words."

Empress Chen thought she had gotten over Zhao Jie. Delighted, she patted her hand and said, "Good, as long as you get over this, this empress can let go of the stone in her heart."

Gao Dan Yang pursed her lips and forced herself to smile.

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Since then, Wei Luo stayed at home and didn't leave Duke Ying's residence.

During the past several days, a carriage came to Duke Ying's residence every day with an invitation to the palace from Princess Tianji, but she didn't go even once. She knew that it wasn't Zhao Liuli looking for her. It was Zhao Jie. She wasn't an idiot. She learned from her mistakes. If Zhao Liuli was really looking for her, she would order people to inform her first, then send a carriage to the palace. It was only when Zhao Jie was looking for her that a carriage would directly bring her to Prince Jing's residence.

Why was he looking for her? She wasn't a doctor. He was currently injured. It would be better if he spent this time focused on recuperating.

In addition, Empress Chen was worried about him and would certainly be visiting him from time to time. Last time, she had gotten away because Liuli had helped out with an excuse. If she were to meet Empress Chen again, how would she be able to explain?

She had carefully considered. For both of their reputations, it would be better if she didn't go.

Ten days after Zhao Jie was injured, Wei Luo still hadn't visited



Prince Jing's residence.

As the days continued into summer, the days became hotter and hotter. Wei Luo was wearing a gauzy, magnolia color robe embroidered with butterflies and leaning on her couch to enjoy the cool air near her lattice doorway. Her clothing was flimsy. There was only a peach pink dudou inside her robe. Her white jade-like flesh could be vaguely seen. Even so, she still felt hot. She leaned on her couch, sipped on the pickled plum juice that Jin Lu had brought, and listlessly said, "Why isn't it cold?"

While fanning her, Jin Lu explained, "This year's ice is scarce. It's not easy to buy... Miss, don't be anxious. Sixth Young Master has left the residence to personally buy some and might be back soon."

Her face slightly eased, "Oh. Okay, I'll wait for Chang Hong to come back."

A little while later, Bai Lan walked into her inner room. She saw her Miss lazily leaning against the couch with her robe falling down and exposing half of her delicate and smooth shoulder. She looked down to see the exquisite skin on her chest. Although she was a woman, she couldn't help looking. After a while, she looked away, swallowed her saliva, and said, "Miss, people for Count Zhong Yi's family have come to see Fifth Master. It seems like they're here to discuss your marriage with Young Master Song Hui." After a pause, she added, "Prince Jing has also come. He's currently in the receiving room."

## Chapter 86.1

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How did these two groups of people bump into each other...

Wei Luo suddenly lost her interest in drinking tea and sat up on the couch. Her eyes turned and she asked, "Why did Prince Jing come?"

Last time, Zhao Jie had said he would wait until his injuries were healed to come to Duke Ding's residence to propose marriage. Now, he had suddenly come here. It couldn't be that he was here to propose marriage, right? How could his injuries heal so quickly? But, why did he come here at the same time as Count Zhong Yi's people? Now, the two families would meet each other and propose marriage at the same time. How would other people look at her?

This wouldn't do. Somewhat anxious, she quickly picked up and put on a moon white outer robe with a golden peony pattern that was next to her and prepared to go out to see the situation.

Fortunately, Bai Lin timely said, "I heard that His Highness Prince Jing came here to talk to old Master Duke Ying. It wasn't too urgent. He probably had some something he wanted to discuss."

Oh, she immediately relaxed and sat back down on the couch. Soon, she thought of something else and tilted her head to look at Bai Lan, "You said that Count Zhong Yi's people came to the residence to discuss marriage. What was that about?"

Bai Lan had recently come back from the main room and had handled everything. She replied, "Master Song Bai Ye and his wife came here to look for Fifth Master to discuss your marriage with Young Master Song Hui."

Wei Luo would soon be fourteen and Song Hui had recently finishing taking the court examination, so now would be a good time to settle their marriage. Song Bai Ye and his wife had thought

this matter over for a few days before deciding to come to Duke Ying's residence today to discuss with Wei Kun the wedding date for their two children.

Wei Luo had expected this day would come, so when she heard Bai Lan's words, she wasn't as anxious as before. She quietly thought for a while, then she asked Bai Lan, "Where's my daddy? Is he meeting them right now?"

Bai Lan nodded, "Fifth Master recently went over to meet them."

She supported her cheek with her hand and frowned. If Wei Kun hadn't already gone to meet them, she could speak with him first to not quickly agree with this marriage. Unfortunately, Wei Kun was already there, so she didn't have the opportunity to say anything. However, this was still fine. Today, they were only discussing. They might not settle on a wedding date. It was very probable that they were just probing the other party's opinion and interest. She looked down and asked, "Did older brother Song Hui also come?"

Bai Lan said, "He came. Young Master Song Hui is also in the main room."

Wei Luo called Bai Lan to her side and whispered into her ear, "Stand outside of the main room and listen to what they're saying inside. Be careful. Don't let anyone notice you're listening."

Bai Lan cautiously nodded, then she turned around and left.

Wei Luo stood up and walked around in circles in her inner room. She couldn't keep delaying the matter with Song Hui. The decision couldn't be delayed. She should clearly say what had to be said. If she kept delaying this, the marriage might get finalized and that wouldn't be good.

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Inside the main room, Wei Kun was sitting on an ironwood chair. Song Bai Ye and his wife were sitting to his left and Song Hui was

sitting to his right.

Song Hui was wearing a dark blue robe with a grape vine pattern and a hat with jade in the center. He seemed calm and didn't seem any different from usual. If you had to point out a difference, the smile in his eyes was a little bit deeper and gentler than usual. He was holding a glazed white teacup with a lotus pattern. Without any change in his expression, he listened to Wei Kun and his parents talking and would occasionally add a few words.

Since they came here to discuss marriage, both parties knew that Song Hui and Wei Luo would intentionally or unintentionally be brought up during the conversation.

Wei Kun drank a mouthful of tea, slight turned his head to look at Song Hui, and asked, "Virtuous nephew, what are your plans after passing the court examination?"

The results for the court examination had already come out. Song Hui had received second place. The Director of Board of Rites's son, Zuo Chen Huai had received first place. Emperor Chong Zhen had personally graded his paper. Although Song Hui was below Zuo Chen Huai, Emperor Chong Zhen had also praised him. His future career would most likely go smoothly.

Song Hui put down the teacup and modestly and respectfully said, "If there isn't anything unexpected, I would like to stay in Imperial Hanlin Academy to take a position to compile and edit."

Back then, Wei Kun had also started from Imperial Hanlin Academy and had a common interest in this topic.

The two of them spoke several words about this topic. On the other side, Song Bai Ye's wife couldn't resist saying, "Hui-er has been busying studying for the exams the past few years and delayed other things. Now, he finally succeeded and should be concerned with marriage." Then, she looked at Wei Kun and straightforwardly asked, "Hui-er and Ah Luo have been engaged since they were young. Shouldn't their marriage be settled now?"

Wei Kun hadn't expected that she would be so straightforward. For a moment, he didn't know how to reply, "This..."

Although he intended for their two children to marry, he had painfully raised his precious daughter to this age. At the idea of her marrying, he was still reluctant to part with her. In addition, if he agreed to quickly, wouldn't he be losing face? No matter what, they should still discuss this for a while. If he easily agreed, then it would seem like his daughter wasn't a good marriage candidate and he was in a hurry to give her to someone.

He steadied his mind, drank some tea, and slowly said, "Madam Song is right. We should carefully considered Ah Luo and virtuous nephew's marriage. Ah Luo is still young. I don't want her to get married so early. We should at least wait until after her hairpin ceremony..."

Wei Luo would soon turn fourteen, so he was saying to wait one more year.

But, Song Hui was already twenty. If they waited another year, wouldn't it be too late? Madam Song was slightly hesitant. After quietly thinking, she thought her previous words were too hasty. She changed her tone and said, "It would fine to wait until after her hairpin ceremony. My meaning was to settle the marriage, then have the wedding ceremony later..."

As long as the marriage was settled, it would be fine to wait another year.

She had met Wei Luo a few times and was very satisfied with her. Not only was she beautiful, she was also very well behaved and understanding. The most important thing was that her son, Song Hui, really liked her. It would be worth it to wait a year for her.

Wei Kun thoughtfully nodded to reluctantly acknowledge her words. He looked at Song Hui and said, "What do you think virtuous nephew?"

Song Hui's eyebrows smoothed out. He smiled and said, "I'm willing to wait until Ah Luo's hairpin ceremony."

These words were already very clear, so they moved onto talking about betrothal gifts and the wedding date.

Servant girls came forward to bring fresh teapots and pour the tea into teacups. Bai Lan delivered a cup of e mei mao feng (green tea) to Song Hui. There was a piece of paper underneath his cup. Song Hui probably felt the paper. He glanced at her. Her head was lowered and without changing her expression, she said, "Young Master Song Hui, please enjoy the tea." Then, she turned around and left the room.

Song Hui held the teacup. While Wei Kun and his parents weren't looking, he opened the paper in hand to read. After he finished reading, he hid the paper inside his sleeve without leaving a trace, stood up, cupped his hands in salute towards Wei Kun and his parents, "Maternal uncle, father, and mother, please continue talking. I'm going out for a bit."

Seeing that he had a pressing matter, they didn't ask any questions and nodded their head to let him leave.

## Chapter 86.2

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Song Hui left the main room and saw Jin Lu waiting for him nearby.

He followed her to the end of the verandah. Pine Courtyard's entrance was in front of them. Next to the entrance, there was a young girl standing beneath the tall, large pine tree that seemed to pierce the sky. She was wearing a moon white outer robe and a pomegranate skirt. One color was the pinnacle of simplicity. The other color was glamorous and beautiful. The contrasting colors made her seem like autumn's blossoming pomegranate flowers. It was mesmerizing. She looked fragile and alluring.

Song Hui walked forward and called out, "Younger sister Ah Luo."

Wei Luo looked at him and faintly smiled, "Older brother Song Hui."

Wei Luo had written the message on that paper. Bai Lan had told her about the discussion inside the main room. Taking the opportunity that he hadn't left yet, she want to clear things up with him.

Song Hui stopped a few steps way from her. The distance wasn't far or close. It was a proper distance according to etiquette and wouldn't let other people misunderstand, "Is there something that younger sister Ah Luo wants to say?"

Before he had come, Wei Luo had already prepared her speech. Now that he had come, her hands were behind her back and her eyes were smiling. In a serene tone, she told him, "Let's end our engagement. Older brother Song Hui, I don't want to marry you."

Song Hui's smile stiffened. Stunned and rather helpless, he stood in place and asked, "What?"

She controlled herself and didn't repeat her words. She

continued, "I know older brother Song Hui came here to discuss our marriage. And I also know we've been engaged since we were young. If there isn't any mishaps, I'll be your bride in the future." She looked up. Her small, beautiful face smile sweetly, but her words were like icy shards that stabbed into his heart. "But, I've been thinking about this a lot recently. I only see you as an older brother. I don't have any romantic feelings towards you. If I force myself to marry you, our married life won't be happy."

Wei Luo thought of many ways to end her engagement with Song Hui. This method would harm them the least.

Song Hui was really good. She didn't want to hurt his feelings, but she also wouldn't marry him. If he could agree to end this engagement, it would be the best. Every one would be delighted and satisfied.

Song Hui stood in place, stared at her, and didn't say anything for a long time.

His happy mood rapidly fell. They had recently been discussing their marriage and he thought he would soon possess her. He had watching this young girl grow up. Only he clearly knew how deep his affection for her was. But, in the next moment, she told him that she didn't want to marry him and that she wouldn't be happy if she married him.

She hadn't married him yet. How could she know she wouldn't be happy?

Without noticing, Song Hui had taken two steps forward. The brightness in his eyes had dimmed. The formerly gentle and calm person was at a complete loss. "Do you think it's too abrupt? If you're not willing, Ah Luo, I can wait two more years..."

Wei Luo shook her head. She tilted her head and looked at him, "It's not that..." Her voice was crisp as she said, "Older brother Song Hui, I like someone else."



Before, Song Hui liked to listen to her talk. He felt that her sweet and soft voice was wrapped in a layer of honey. Now, he suddenly discovered. The honey was wrapped around sharp blades. Every word she said was like a stab at his heart. He didn't know what to say with his stabbed heart. A long time later, he hoarsely said, "Who is he?"

Wei Luo blinked and didn't tell him.

Even if she didn't say, he could probably guess.

Was it Zhao Jie? His possessiveness towards Ah Luo had been very obvious that day on Jing He Villa. He should have had a sense of crisis earlier. Now, Zhao Jie had prevailed and stolen his girl...

Song Hui's heart felt stuffy and a continuous dull pain, but he didn't know what to say to keep her. He had always thought of her as his and never thought what losing her would feel like. Now, he suddenly knew and couldn't accept it. He walked forward, held her hand, and stubbornly said, "I don't want to end our engagement..." He looked at her and repeated, "Ah Luo, I don't want to end our engagement."

He had used some strength to hold her hand and Wei Luo couldn't pull away despite trying.

Wei Luo furrowed her eyebrows. She thought he would agree if she said these words. Why was it like this? Not only did he refuse to end their engagement, she had made things more difficult.

At this moment, a long arm unexpectedly came between them.

Zhao Jie grabbed Song Hui's hand and blocked his view of Wei Luo. Seemingly unaffected by the scene, he coldly said, "Let go."

## Chapter 87.1

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This time, Zhao Jie had come here to see Duke Ying because of the engagement between Wei Luo and Count Zhong Yi's grandson.

An hour ago, he and Duke Ying were sitting inside a room and seemingly playing xiangqi (T/N: Chinese chess). In actuality, they were discussing business matters.

Zhao Jie took out a black chess piece from the chess box and put it in the center of the chessboard. His phoenix eyes were controlled and his bearing was calm. He slowly said, "Not long ago, this prince received some news. Presumably, Duke Ying also already knows."

Duke Ying Wei Zhang Chun nodded, then he closely followed behind by placing down a white chess piece. "Yes, I heard the news before Your Highness came back to the capital. How are Your Highness's injuries? Are they a significance hindrance?"

For Prince Jing to be wounded, it wasn't a trifling matter. In addition, since Zhao Jie didn't try to conceal this news, everyone in the capital knew that Zhao Jie had been seriously injured on the way back to the capital by the next day. Duke Ying had originally intended to go to Prince Jing's residence to see how he was doing. However, if Emperor Chong Zhen learned about this visit, he would become suspicious. So after thinking about it, he didn't have any alternatives and could only drop the idea of visiting.

The two of them didn't meet until today. Zhao Jie paid a visit to Duke Ying under the excuse of "coincidentally passing by and comparing notes on chess skills".

Zhao Jie wasn't hampered or anxious. He played around with a black chess piece by twisting it in his hand. A long time later, he finally said, "Does Duke Ying know who wanted to take this prince's life."

Wei Zhang Chun had previously thought about this question.

Now that Zhao Jie was asking him, he pondered for a moment and said, "Could it be related to the sixth prince?"

At this juncture, the only person that would attack Zhao Jie was sixth prince Zhao Zhang. This time, when Zhao Jie went to Shanxi for the disaster relief, he had performed this assignment wonderfully. Emperor Chong Zhen would definitely praise him and bestow a reward. This result was undoubtedly dangerous to Zhao Zhang. Zhao Zhang harbored bad thoughts, so it wasn't impossible that he would take this opportunity to move against Zhao Jie.

Zhao Jie chuckled and didn't express an opinion. He put down the chess piece and said, "It is indeed related to him. Although old sixth's name was used, other people were behind this attack."

Zhao Jie understood Zhao Zhang too well. Zhao Zhang was small-minded. Unless, he was forced to a path of no retreat, he wouldn't be this impulsive and do something that would be easily found out. Mostly likely, he didn't order this and was only a spectator.

Wei Zhang Chun took off the cover on the teacup with a blue chrysanthemum petal design, drank a mouthful of tea, and asked, "Who is the prince referring to?"

He smiled and calmly said, "Prince Ru Yang Li Zhi Liang."

Prince Ru Yang was an impulsive person with a straightforward mind. To say it more harshly, he was a person that only had a matured body. His mind was simple. He must have heard that Li Song's broken wrist was related to Zhao Jie. Harboring resentment, he looked for an opportunity to avenge his son. Unfortunately, he didn't succeed. There were too many gaps in his plan. Zhao Jie had sent people to secretly investigate him and knew that he was definitely involved with this matter.

He had thought thirty to fifty people would be able to take Zhao Jie's life. He had underestimated Zhao Jie too much.

Hearing this, Wei Zhang Chun suddenly realized the truth. Instead of showing panic and fear, he bluntly asked, "How will the prince deal with him?"

Zhao Jie supported his chin with one hand and the other hand unhurriedly whirled around the teacup with a blue chrysanthemum petal design. His phoenix eyes were deep and his lips curved up into a smile, "I already executed the overall plan. To help this prince, Duke Ying only needs to step forward when the time comes..." He picked up a black chess piece and put it down to block off the white pieces' escape route. "And old sixth's chess piece will become useless."

Duke Ying's countenance was solemn, "On the basis of the prince's orders, this official will definitely do my best to help."

After finishing their discussion of official business, Zhao Jie played a game of chess with Duke Ying. When the final chess piece was placed down, he casually asked, "If this prince didn't remember incorrectly, your family's fourth miss has an engagement with someone from Count Zhong Yi's family?"

Duke Ying nodded. He didn't conceal anything. "My granddaughter Ah Luo was engaged to Song Hui when her mother was pregnant. Now, they've both grown up. Presumably, they'll be getting married soon."

Zhao Jie's emotions couldn't be seen on his face. He didn't reply for a moment.

Wei Zhang Chun thought he was only casually asking and was about to move onto another topic. Unexpectedly, in an icy tone, Zhao Jie said, "Duke Ying is probably clearer about the relationship between Count Zhong Yi and Zhao Zhang than this prince. If the skin is gone, where will the hair attach?\* Has Duke Ying thought about what would happen to Fourth Miss after she gets married to Song Hui?"

\* (T/N: Idiom that means if something's basis for survival is gone,

then it can't continue to exist.)

Wei Zhang Chun showed a startled expression.

Zhao Jie looked down and coincidentally saw the faint scar on his wrist. Too much time had passed. It had long faded from the original vivid mark, but it still didn't completely disappear. "Ah Luo is an intelligent and clever girl. On behalf of her close relationship with my younger sister, this prince had said a few extra words and hopes that Duke Ying will carefully reconsider this marriage."

Wei Zhang Chun's expression froze. He had to admit there was a logic to Zhao Jie's words, especially the words "If the skin is gone, where will the hair attach?"

Duke Ying loved Wei Luo dearly. He naturally didn't want to put her in a difficult position between the two families and have to live in an abyss of suffering. But, if he really wanted to cancel the engagement, it wasn't easy. Duke Ying said, "The prince's words are logical, but this engagement has already existed for so long. If we suddenly break our promise, other people will think this family doesn't keep their words..."

Zhao Jie's finger touched the chess box and his lips slowly showed a trace of a smile, "Duke Ying has misunderstood this prince's intentions. This prince has only asked you to reconsider and hasn't asked you to cancel the engagement. It wouldn't be impossible to have Count Zhong Yi's family break the promise."

Count Zhong Yi's family was gradually declining. Each day was worse than the day before. If they didn't have Noble Consort Ning and Zhao Zhang supporting them, no one would care enough to ask about them. Fortunately, in this generation they had Song Hui who had scored second place in the court examination. If his official career went smoothly, it wouldn't be difficult for him to bring honor to his family. Song Hui had feelings for Wei Luo. To have him willingly cancel the engagement, it wouldn't be easy...

Then, he could only take an alternative route by targeting his parents.

Zhao Jie already had a plan for canceling the engagement, but he didn't mention this to Duke Ying. He stood up, pushed open the doors, walked outside, and said, "Before this prince left the palace, Liuli asked this prince to pass on a message to Fourth Miss. Where would she usually be at this time?"

Wei Zhang Chun followed him out and said, "Prince, wait here. I'll have the servants bring Ah Luo here."

Zhao Jie paused, then he said, "No need. I'll personally go over there."

## Chapter 87.2

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This was how he came to see the scene in front of him.

Zhao Jie's eyebrows were stormy and the air became chilly. A bottomless pair of dark eyes stared at Song Hui. Without saying anything, the pressure used to hold Song Hui's hand involuntarily increased.

Duke Ying came forward, furrowed his eyebrows, and asked, "What happened? Ah Luo, what did you say to House Song's heir?"

From behind, he could only see that the two people had been standing very close. Song Hui was tightly holding Wei Luo's hand and Wei Luo couldn't break free. It seemed that something had happened between them. When Zhao Jie stepped forward to stop them, Duke Ying didn't notice anything was strange. Instead, he felt somewhat grateful.

Song Hui directly looked at Zhao Jie, then he looked at Wei Luo who was behind him. The desolate and injured feeling he had in his eyes disappeared in flash. He immediately lowered his head, let go of Wei Luo's hand, retreated two steps, saluted Duke Ying, and sincerely said, "This younger generation has acted rudely towards younger sister Ah Luo. Please forgive me Duke Ying."

Song Hui had always been seen as a young man who had a sense of propriety and rarely acted rashly like today. Duke Ying was slightly displeased, but he didn't say anything to make it difficult for from. He only quietly said, "Although you're engaged to Ah Luo, you still shouldn't be too close to her. Don't display this type of behavior again."

Song Hui didn't explain what had happened. Instead, he showed an apologetic attitude and said, "Yes, Song Hui will obey your edification."

Duke Ying grudgingly nodded and looked at Zhao Jie, "What

message did Prince Jing want to pass along to Ah Luo?"

Zhao Jie turned around and walked a few steps away from Wei Luo to give a proper appearance. Perhaps, the anger in his heart wasn't quelled yet, so his voice was slightly cold as he said, "Next month, Liuli will leave the capital to go to Zi Yu Manor for a summer holiday. She especially invites Fourth Miss to go there with her."

Wei Luo stood in place and considered. If Liuli wanted to go to a villa for a summer holiday, why was Zhao Jie the one telling her? However, this wasn't the appropriate place to say these thoughts out loud. He wasn't giving her a chance to refuse. After thinking it over, she said, "I'll have to inconvenience older brother Prince Jing to tell her that I'll go there with her when the time comes."

Zhao Jie looked at her. He used to have a smile in his eyes whenever he looked at her, but right now, there wasn't the slightest trace of a smile in his eyes. After she thought about it, it was to be expected. He was injured and she didn't visit him even once. His heart probably felt very bad?

But, she didn't have any other options. Who told them to have a relationship that couldn't be shown to others?

Zhao Jie looked away from her and quietly said, "If Fourth Miss agrees, then personally go to the palace now. Liuli has other words she wants to say to you."

Wei Luo's thoughts were sluggish as she said, "Go now?"

He looked down and said, "Yes, there's a palace carriage outside the residence. Liuli has specially asked this prince to personally bring you to the palace."

Wei Luo, "..."

Was this really Liuli's idea? Or, was this his idea?

Wei Luo knew that she couldn't refuse. She pursed her lips, nodded, and said, "Since it's like that, older brother Prince Jing,



wait a bit for me. I'll come right back after changing my clothes."

Because the temperature was too hot, she was currently wearing casual clothing. She was only wearing a thin, almost transparent short-sleeve top inside her outer robe. It was okay to wear this at home, but it wouldn't be good to wear this outside. Who would have expected that after glancing at her, Zhao Jie would open his thin lips to offer his opinion, "No need to change. Just go like this." His gaze lowered and he looked at her pomegranate skirt and shoes embroidered with golden begonia flowers. His tone was very meaningful as he said, "Liuli won't mind."

There was a serene and hidden emotion in his eyes. Wei Luo subconsciously took a step back and wanted to hide her shoes so that he couldn't look, "Oh... Okay."

In that case, she could only go the palace.

Duke Ying started to respectfully walk Prince Jing out of the residence. Wei Luo hesitated for a moment, then she followed along with Jin Lu and Bai Lan. When Wei Luo passed by Song Hui, she paused for a moment before continuing to straightforwardly walk away.

She was truly a cruel little girl. When she decided to draw a boundary, she wouldn't even leave behind anything for delusions.

Song Hui slowly turned around and watched Wei Luo's back as she walked further and further away. Her recent words hovered around his ears. It was impossible to get rid of them

She really wanted to end their engagement?

She was a little girl that he had watch grown up. He wanted to put her into the innermost center of his heart. Countless times, he had thought of ways to treat her well after they got married. He would care for her and love her. Nothing would come between them. Before, he wasn't able to see her enough. After they were married, he could close the doors and properly look at her until he

was satisfied. Unfortunately... she wouldn't give him the opportunity.

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At Duke Ying's residence's entrance, a vermillion-lacquered, flat-roofed carriage slowly drove away in the direction of the palace.

Fifteen minutes later, the carriage suddenly stopped on the road.

Inside the carriage, Wei Luo's mind cried out.

In the next moment, the deep black cloth curtain with golden embroidery was lifted from the outside. Zhao Jie's navy blue robe with a python pattern appeared in her sight. She couldn't help clenching her small fist. "Older brother Prince Jing..."

Zhao Jie's gaze swept past her and towards Jin Lu and Bai Lan. He said, "Leave. This prince has words to say to your Miss."

Jin Lu and Bai Lan's faces showed their hesitation. If they left, only their Miss and Prince Jing would be inside the carriage. Prince Jing wouldn't do anything to their Miss, right?

Wei Luo thought for a moment, then she said, "You can leave. I have some words to say to older brother Prince Jing. If anything happens, I'll call you inside."

Hearing these words, Jin Lu and Bai Lan left the carriage.

Zhao Jie bent down and went inside the carriage. Originally, the carriage wasn't narrow. She didn't why, but after he came inside, the carriage felt especially crowded. Perhaps, it was because his tall and straight body was right in front of her and made her feel an indescribable sense of oppression.

"Prince Jing..."

Before she could finish her words, the carriage's curtain fell down and blocked the light from outside. The inside of the carriage instantly became dimmer.

Zhao Jie leaned over so that she was between him and the

carriage wall. One hand was against the wall and the other hand was holding her little face. He held her mouth between his lips and stopped her words.

## Chapter 88.1

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Wei Luo felt confused and disoriented from his kisses, even breathing felt like a problem. But, he still wouldn't let go of her. He sucked and bit her lips as if he was starving beast that finally found food and wouldn't be satisfied until he consumed her completely. His kisses contained sulkiness and intensity. When she tilted her head to avoid him, he bit the tip of her tongue to threaten her. When she obediently stopped moving, his kisses gradually turned into a gentle and soft abrasion that swallowed her whimpering.

A long time later, Zhao Jie finally let go of her. His thumb lightly stroked her lips and he hoarsely asked, "Why didn't you come to see me?"

As expected, this was what he had cared about the most. When he finally saw her today, the resentment and discontentment that he had accumulated over the past several days exploded.

Wei Luo's tongue and lips felt slightly sore. It was totally his fault for kissing so fiercely and he even bit her. Her lips were definitely swollen. How would she explain to Jin Lu and Bai Lan when they saw her like this? She bit his forefinger and didn't let go as she grumbled, "Why do I have to go see you?"

Did he still have to say? Zhao Jie didn't pull his finger out. He leaned over and kissed the tip of her nose. In a slightly gloomy tone, he said, "I'm injured."

Then, he took his hand away, held her hand and placed it on chest where he had been injured. The wound there hadn't completely healed and was wrapped in layers of white bandages. Even separated by clothing, she could still feel it. His chest was very hard and underneath his ribcage, a powerful heart thumped. His entire body emitted a man's strong aura. Compared to him, Wei Luo was even more petite. She was small and soft. Wrapped in his arms, she was like a little girl that didn't have any way to

escape and could only listen as he forcefully asked again, "Ah Luo, baby, why didn't you come to see me?"

Wei Luo's face was red. The redness reached her ears.

From the time he confessed to her, he had started acting unscrupulous and now he even had the cheek to call her "baby". Who was his baby? So nauseating! She didn't like this address at all.

But, for some inexplicable reason, her heart and body softened. She didn't even have the energy to refute him.

Wei Luo tilted her head, stared at the pillows embroidered with dark reddish purple peony flowers inside the carriage, and slowly said, "Older sister Gao told me to not visit you."

The expression on Zhao Jie's face immediately changed. His sword-like eyebrows were slightly knitted. Sitting on the scarlet cushion with rounded embroidery design, he placed her onto his leg, cupped his hands around her little face, and asked, "What exactly did she say to you?"

Wei Luo didn't look at him. Her big eyes that could distinguish between black and white blinked and she honestly said, "That day, after older sister Gao escorted me to the entrance, she said that I was grown up and should be considering my reputation. I shouldn't casually come to Prince Jing's residence."

She admitted that she was intentionally saying these words. She felt possessive. From the time that she realized her feelings, she wanted Zhao Jie to be completely hers. Why should Gao Dan Yang be able to show off sovereignty towards her? She also wanted to have Zhao Jie. Besides, she didn't add any additional details to make the story more interesting. She only recounted facts. She looked at Zhao Jie. Her pink and soft lips curved up, "Older brother Prince Jing, do you think older sister Gao's words were right?"

Zhao Jie's face didn't look good. He lowered his head, kissed her, and rubbed his lips against hers. He couldn't bear to leave. "Don't listen to her words." The young girl's taste was too good, just one taste made him addicted. As soon as he saw her, he couldn't resist wanting to kiss her. He wanted to kiss her entire body. His mind could still be counted as clear-headed. He remembered that they were inside a carriage and didn't act too wild. He continued to say, "Whether or not you can enter Prince Jing's residence, only this prince's words matter. Later, when you marry this prince, the entire residence will be yours. You can enter and leave however you want."

Wei Luo grabbed his sleeve. She almost couldn't go on. Her body felt as if it had melted into his embrace, "But Count Zhong Yi's family came today to discuss my marriage with older brother Song Hui..."

Although she had clearly told her feelings to Song Hui and hoped that he would cancel their engagement, Song Hui hadn't agreed.

Song Hui's last words "I don't want to end our engagement" were still ringing in her ears. She felt slightly ashamed and uneasy. It wasn't like there wasn't another method. Wei Zheng liked him. She would only have to use a few small tricks to push Wei Zheng to him. She had wavered between not wanting to give Wei Zheng this small advantage and not hurting Song Hui. In the end, she had taken too long to decide.

Zhao Jie straightened up and thought of the scene he had witnessed at Duke Ying's residence. An ominous look appeared in his eyes, but it was soon hidden away and his phoenix eyes appeared unfathomable again. He held and kneaded her small hand to remove the heat traces left behind by Song Hui's touch, "What did they talk about?"

Wei Luo recollected the words that Bai Lan had heard from eavesdropping and told him, "Daddy says we'll get engaged first, then the wedding will take place a year later and I'll enter Count

Zhong Yi's residence then."

Zhao Jie didn't say anything, but the arm around her waist tightened, "What do you want?"

Wei Luo didn't understanding his meaning, "En?"

He lowered his head to look at her. His eyes were solely focused on her. "Ah Luo, do you want to marry Song Hui, or do you want to marry me? If you marry me, this prince will immediately help you cancel this engagement."

## Chapter 88.2

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Did she still have to say these words? If she didn't want to marry him, would she have let him kiss and hug her? Did he think that everyone received this type of treatment? Wei Luo wanted to roll her eyes. She refused to tell him. Let him feel anxious. "Even if I don't marry you, I'll still be able to cancel this engagement."

Zhao Jie choked and couldn't say anything for a while.

It wasn't easy to obtain the word "agree" from her. Never mind, he would deal with canceling her engagement with Song Hui first. He would only have the chance to propose marriage after her engagement was canceled. At that time, he would carefully coax this young girl. She was already in his hands. Did she think she could still retreat? He wouldn't stop until he consumed her completely.

Naturally, Wei Luo didn't know what he was thinking in his heart. She raised her head to look at him and could only see the healthy curve of his chin and protruding Adam's apple. When he talked, that part would move up and down. She really wanted to touch his Adam's apple. Why was his neck different from her neck? Her neck was flat. There wasn't anything there. The young girl's heart was itchy. In the end, she resisted the impulse and asked, "Big brother, what were you talking about with my paternal grandfather?"

Zhao Jie lowered his head and coincidentally met her bright eyes. His heart softened. "Nothing much, we just talked about how I got injured."

Since he had decided to help her cancel the engagement, he already had a plan in mind. He didn't tell her because he didn't want to trouble her.

Wei Luo finally remembered that he was currently injured. She left his embrace, looked at his chest and arm, and asked, "Who



hurt you? Have your injuries healed? Do they still hurt?"

He had already mostly recovered from his injuries and they had stopped hurting a while ago. It was only that when he was newly injured, he wanted to see her, kiss her, and hug her. Unfortunately, even though he used Liuli's name several times to call her, she still didn't go to Prince Jing's residence even once. While he was lying in bed, he was so mad at her that his teeth felt itchy with the urge to bite her. He thought of how he would bully her when he saw her next. But, when he actually saw her, she had softly and stickily called out "big brother" and more than half of the anger in his heart had been extinguished.

Zhao Jie laughed and his thin lips went up. In a business-like tone, he said, "It won't hurt anymore if Ah Luo kisses me."

Wei Luo, "..."

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The two of them were affectionate with each other for almost an hour inside the carriage. If they kept going, the sky would be dark by the time they were done. It was only when Jin Lu and Bai Lan, who were outside of the carriage, carefully reminded them that Zhao Jie finally loosened his hold on Wei Luo and resumed escorting her to the palace.

Zhao Jie hadn't lied. Zhao Liuli was really going to Zi Yu Villa for summer holiday and would probably stay there for a month. Other than her, Zhao Lin Lang and the other princesses would also be going. Each of the princesses would be bringing along one or two playmates they had good relationships with. There were many rooms in the summer villa, so there weren't any worries about not having enough rooms. It would be very lively there when they all went.

This time, Zhao Liuli had invited Wei Luo to the place to discuss what items they should bring and if she wanted to invite anyone else to come with them.

Wei Luo wanted to invite Liang Yu Rong. Liang Yu Rong was a lively and extroverted girl and would definitely get along with Zhao Liuli.

Zhao Liuli easily agreed and the matter was settled.

During the next several days, there wasn't any movement in Duke Ying's residence or Count Zhong Yi's. No one mentioned Song Hui and Wei Luo's marriage.

Since Zhao Jie was injured, Emperor Chong Zhen had him stay home to recuperate and didn't arrange any work from him. He passed the past several days very idly. Today, he finally took off the white bandages on his chest and arm, bathed, and changed into a navy blue robe with a four-sided cloud pattern. He straightened the cuffs and said to Zhu Geng, "Go to Count Zhong Yi's residence and invite Song Bai Ye over. Just say that this prince wants to see him."

Zhu Geng was probably able to guess his intentions. Other than that young girl, Wei Luo, there couldn't be any other reason. He didn't ask any further question. He nodded and left the room to complete his task.

Prince Jing had completely fallen into the hands of a fourteen-year-old girl... There had been countless women with seductive bodies. He hadn't been interested in women with perfect curves. Instead, he liked a girl that hadn't fully developed. She was so small. Her hand was small. Her feet were small. Her shoulders were small. When she stood next to Prince Jing, it looked like an uncle with his niece. No matter how he looked, they didn't seem like a matching pair. But, other than being small and young, her other qualities were good. She looked more beautiful than anyone else. Her small face was as delicate and pink as a beautiful and radiant spring peach blossom. Half of a person's heart would soften before she even opened her mouth. As soon as she spoke, the other half of that person's heart would lose control as well.

Zhu Geng didn't blame his prince for watching Wei Luo so closely and being so impatient to marry her. No man would be able to resist this type of girl. If he didn't hurry to possess her and waited another year or two, she would become increasingly beautiful. What would he do if he had more and more enemies?

Zhu Geng understood.

He went to Count Zhong Yi's residence and not much later, Song Bai Ye anxiously came over to Prince Jing's residence. He fearfully walked to the receiving room and saluted, "Greetings Your Highness Prince Jing."

Zhao Jie was sitting on an ironwood chair carved with birds of prey. He seemed to have leisurely waited a long time for him. He unhurriedly fiddling with the white jade ring around his thumb before he nodded and said, "You don't need to be overly courteous, sit down."

He sat down in a lower chair with a slightly nervous heart.

Although he rarely interacted with Prince Jing, he couldn't be blamed for overthinking when Zhao Jie suddenly called him over today. Song Bai Ye started to reflect about his past activity. Had he done something wrong and offended Prince Jing? However, even after thinking for a long time, he still didn't have any clues. Instead, he only scared himself into sweating.

He properly and neatly sat in the chair. His palms were sweaty. He asked, "May I ask why Your Highness Prince Jing wanted this Song to come here?"

Zhao Jie looked up and directly looked at him. He didn't beat around the bushes. Neither too fast nor too slowly, he said, "This prince doesn't approve of the engagement between Count Zhong Yi's family and Duke Ying's."

# Chapter 89.1

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For a moment, Song Bai Ye thought he misheard.

Prince Jing was always busy. When would he have time to care about his family's engagement with Duke Ying's? Why would he disapprove? After thinking for long time, Song Bai Ye still didn't understand. He thought that he had offended Prince Jing somehow and sat in his chair as if he was sitting on pins and needles. He cautiously asked, "May I ask why Your Highness Prince Jing said those words?"

Seeing the terror and worry in his eyes, Zhao Jie's sword-like eyebrows went up and he gestured at Zhu Geng. "Take the item out. Let him look at it."

Zhu Geng had been waiting at the doorway for a long time. Hearing Zhao Jie's words, he took out a transcribed book from his sleeve and delivered it to Song Bai Ye. Without saying a word, he walked back to his original place.

Not knowing what was written inside the blue book, Song Bai Ye took the offered book. He flipped opened the book and his face immediately became whiter than the paper!

His hands shook and he seemed to be unable to steadily hold the book. Trembling with fear, he hastily closed the book, looked at Zhao, and was almost unable to clearly say, "Your Highness... This..."

Zhao Jie's mood was very joyful. He was holding in his smile and calmly asked, "Did you find your name?"

Song Bai Ye's mind was panicking. Even racking his brains, he couldn't understand his meaning.

This was Zhao Zhang's book. Not only had he recorded down all of the officials he had secret dealings with, he had also recorded down what they had plotted together. Each affair was clearly

written down and they ranged from major crimes of secretly stashing weaponry to minor offenses like accepting bribes and bending the law. Even if a person wanted to overlook this book, he couldn't. Originally, Zhao Zhang had written down these things for convenience, just in case he forgot. However, as he wrote down more and more things, it became his Achilles' heel. If it fell into someone else's hands, not only would he suffer, but also the officials under his control.

Zhao Zhang had hidden this book very well and he was the only person that knew about the existence of this book.

But now this book had unexpectedly appeared in Zhao Jie's hands! How was he able to obtain this book? Did they still have a way to survive?

Song Bai Ye quickly went through his memories of what he had done as Zhao Zhang's follower during the past several years. Would those things have been recorded in this book? When he thought about this, his body became covered in sweat. As he looked Zhao Jie, who was unperturbedly sitting in front of him, he almost couldn't breath. "Prince..."

During the past several years, he had done many things to in order to preserve Count Zhong Yi's family. Most of the things were innocuous, but there were a few things that would be enough to sentence his entire family to death. He could only pray that Zhao Jie didn't know yet.

Unfortunately, Buddha didn't hear his prayers. Zhao Jie still had that leisurely and calm posture. Zhao Jie's tone was light and understated tone as he said the words that would control whether or not his entire family would live or die, "If I remember correctly, the matter of secretly storing weaponry is definitely related to you. Where are the weapons hidden? Is it southern Xunzhou? That area is surrounded by mountains and there's only one way out. It's a good place. Unfortunately, it's rather far. If there really was a battle, it would take too much time to transport the weapons."

At this time, Song Bai Ye already didn't have any words to say. Zhao Jie actually clearly knew everything they had done and planned! He was even leisurely helping them analyze the situation. How much information did he have against them?

This was the first time Song Bai Ye experienced Zhao Jie's power. No wonder people said he was a profound schemer with ruthless methods and that it would better to offend anyone else, but Prince Jing Zhao Jie. He seemed taciturn, but in actuality, he had already surveyed the entire situation and was only toying around with people for entertainment.

Song Bai Ye didn't have time to wipe the sweat on his forehead. Panic-stricken, he kneeled in front of Zhao Jie and incoherently said, "Prince, spare me. I don't have anything to do with weaponry in the southern mountains... I only went there once..."

This didn't move Zhao Jie. He smiled while asking, "Since this wasn't related to you, why did you go there?"

Song Bai Ye was speechless. He wanted to present a better excuse. However, after saying "I" for a long time, he still couldn't provide a single word to excuse himself. After all, the weaponry really was related to him. Although he wasn't the mastermind, he was still an accomplice. During the past several years, when Zhao Zhang was having people make these weapons, it was him who directly dealt with these people. Every month, he was able to take some of the money he was given and use it to support Count Zhong Yi's residence's expenses. Now, Zhao Jie knew this matter. If Zhao Jie told this to the emperor, he wasn't sure if he would have an escape path...

Thinking of this, his dread increased.

Zhao Jie turned the ring on his thumb and unhurriedly said, "If you want to save your life and your family's, listen to this prince's words. Cancel the engagement with Duke Ying's family."

Song Bai Ye didn't understand. How were these two things

related? Why would he have an escape path if he canceled the engagement with Duke Ying's family? He held the book as if it was hot potato. "Why is Your Highness Prince Jing forbidding Count Zhong Yi's family from being related to Duke Ying's family by marriage?"

Zhao Jie glanced at him. His dark eyes were luminescence and quiet. He warned him, "This is the prince's business. It's not your place to ask."

After that one glance, Song Bai Ye felt as if there was an icy draft behind his back. He repeatedly nodded and said, "Yes... this one has overstepped his authority."

What had to be said had been said. He assessed the trade-off. This engagement couldn't be kept. Prince Jing Zhao Jie had personally spoken. Even if he was reluctant, he still had to be cold-blooded and end this relationship. After all, the hundreds of lives in Count Zhong Yi's residence were still more important than Wei Luo. If the daughter-in-law was gone, he could find another one. If life were gone, then there would be no return. While feeling fearful and trepidation, he agreed. Before saying his good-bye, he said, "This book..."

Zhao Jie disapprovingly said, "If you want it, take it. Since this prince can have one copy transcribed, then I can have a second and third copy transcribed."

How could he dare to take it? Sweat dropped from his forehead as he hurriedly said, "I wouldn't dare... If there's nothing else, I'll immediately leave."

Zhao Jie declined to comment. While he was on the way out, Zhao Jie reminded him, "You have to cancel this engagement within one month."

Next month would be Wei Luo's fourteenth birthday. Once Wei Luo was fourteen, he would go to Duke Ying's residence to propose marriage. As long as he resolved the problem of House Song, he

would naturally be able to resolve any other problem.

Song Bai Ye repeatedly agreed. He waited until he left Prince Jing's residence, then he heavily breathed in and out. He felt as if he had died and was alive again. It had been too frightening. He never wanted to come back to Prince Jing's residence again!



## Chapter 89.2

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The temperature had been very hot in the capital for many days. There was finally a drizzle yesterday. Although it wasn't a heavy rain, the temperature was finally a bit cooler. When Wei Luo woke up the next morning and stood next the window stretching her waist, there was a cool breeze. She accepted the colorful cup with a chrysanthemum pattern from Jin Lu, rinsed her mouth, and in high spirits, she said, "I haven't gone out in a long time. Let's go outside and walk around."

Because of the recent hot weather, she had been lazy and didn't leave the residence. If she wasn't spending the day sleeping in her inner room, she was sitting underneath the trees to enjoy the relatively cooler air. Other than having to go to classes or visiting her elders to pay respect, she didn't want to move at all. As soon as she moved, her body would be covered in sweat.

It was precisely because of this quality that her cheeks remained so fair and delicate that it seemed as if water could be pinched out of her cheeks while other people became tanned during summer.

Soon, it would be their birthday. Chang Hong had already prepared her gift a long time ago, but she didn't even have a clue for his gift. Since she would be going out today, she would look around. If she saw anything that would be suitable for Chang Hong, she would buy it as his gift.

Jin Lu ordered people to prepare a carriage. After Wei Luo finished breakfast and mentioned her plan to Wei Kun, and received his agreement, she left the residence.

The weather was good today. There were many pedestrians with different clothing going back and forth between the various street vendors. There were also teenage girls like Wei Luo outside. Some were wearing veils and some were riding in their carriages. People came and went. The streets were at their bustling peak with

noise and excitement.

A vermillion-lacquered eight treasure-style carriage stopped at jade shop's entrance. A teenage girl wearing a honey-colored top and a brightly colored, gauzy skirt embroidered with flowers and birds stepped down from the carriage. Her skin was better than white snow and her countenance was as fair as flowers and the moon.

It cause the people passing by to cast sidelong glances. Wei Luo was only thinking about going into the store to look around, so she wasn't wearing a veil. She held her skirt as she walked inside the store. There weren't many people inside the store. It could be considered peaceful. There were two young women looking at the items. One was wearing a pink robe and the other was wearing a blue robe.

Seeing her out of ordinary presence, the shopkeeper hurriedly came forward to personally welcome her, "May I ask what this miss is looking for?"

Wei Luo looked around the store, then she tilted her head and asked, "It'll be my younger brother's birthday soon. Is there anything suitable for a young man?"

The shopkeeper repeatedly nodded and led her to the left side towards a black display case outlined in gold, "These are all accessories for men. Miss, please look."

Wei Luo stopped at the gold outlined display case. On the top, there was a dazzling line-up of jade accessories that was a feast for the eyes. In the center of the jade accessories, there was purple tray outlined in gold and decorated with good fortune symbols.

On the tray, there was a white jade hairpin with a carved hornless dragon and an ivory pendant with a carved hornless dragon. Both of these items were very well made. Wei Luo liked them at first sight. She held both of them in her hands to look. Which one would Chang Hong like? When she thought about it,

Chang Hong didn't have his capping ceremony yet and couldn't wear his hair in a cap, so he wouldn't be able to use the hairpin. She could only give him the ivory pendant.

(T/N: Capping ceremony is the male version of the female adulthood hairpin ceremony except men have it when they're twenty-years-old instead of fifteen.)

She asked the shopkeeper for the price. The shopkeeper raised his palm and swayed it. "If this miss truly wants to buy it, I'll sell it to you for five hundred silver."

It wasn't too expensive. Just as Wei Luo was going to have Jin Lu pay, she couldn't resist pointing at the other accessory and asking, "And this one?"

The shopkeeper said, "This one is slightly more expensive. It's seven hundred silver."

Wei Luo really liked it. The white jade was exquisite. When she touched it, it was slippery and smooth. She thought of the words "Modest, cautious, and noble character that's as gentle as jade". Her heart thought of a person and she involuntarily thought of him wearing this jade. She hesitantly offered, "Would you be willing to sell them both for a thousand silver? If yes, I'll buy both."

The storekeeper's face showed his hesitation. He finally had a large business transaction and this young woman was liberal with her money. Her offer wasn't too low. No matter how he calculated, he wouldn't be suffering a financial loss. And so, he pretended to be pained as he said, "Since this miss really likes these two pieces, then I'll give it to you at that price!"

Jin Lu came forward to pay. The shopkeeper personally put the two items inside a rosewood box carved with lotuses and brought it to Wei Luo, "Miss, take care."

Wei Luo personally held the box instead of handing it over to Bai

Lan. She left the store perfectly satisfied.

Just as Wei Luo was about to enter the carriage and return home, Jin Lu pointed at someone and called out, "Miss, isn't that Yin Lou?"

Wei Luo stopped in front of the carriage and turned around to look. Indeed, it was Wei Zheng's personal servant girl, Yin Lou, and she was wearing an autumn-colored outer robe. She had just come out of a pharmacy and was stuffing something into her sleeve. Perhaps, she was too nervous. When she looked around, she didn't notice them, then she hurriedly left the area.

Jin Lu asked, "Why did she go to a pharmacy? Could Fifth Miss be sick?"

Wei Luo stepped onto the carriage pedal and entered the carriage, "Let's ask after we go back."

After they returned to Pine Courtyard, Jin Lu asked around. Wei Zheng had caught a cold and was in her room resting.

Wei Luo didn't think anymore about what they had seen.

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On the other side, Wei Zheng wasn't actually sick. She was only pretending, so she could have an excuse to send Yin Lou outside to complete a task for her.

Seeing that Yin Lou had returned, she sat up from her couch and asked, "Were you able to buy it? Did anyone see you?"

Yin Lou walked past the divider screen, took out a small white enamel bottle, brought it to Wei Zheng, and whispered, "No one saw me. This is the item that Miss asked for. Miss, please look."

Wei Zheng took the bottle. She didn't have much understanding about this type of item and only read the bottle's label, "Loveable". This was the aphrodisiac she wanted.

Yin Lou secretly knew an old woman in the red light district.

Through her contact with the old woman, she was able to obtain this item. This aphrodisiac didn't need to be drunk. It could be used like incense. As long as people smelled this for a while, they would be filled with lust. Their minds and bodies wouldn't be under their control. The feeling would only stop after a man and woman coupled.

Wei Zheng had recently received Song Ru Wei's invitation. Next month, they would be going to Zi Yu Villa.

She heard from Song Ru Wei that Song Hui would also be going.

# Chapter 90.1

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Song Ru Wei had a good relationship with Zhao Lin Lang, so Zhao Lin Lang invited her to Zi Yu Villa and also said she could bring another person. Thus, Song Ru Wei thought of Wei Zheng.

Hearing that she would have the opportunity to become closer to the seventh princess, Wei Zheng was naturally very happy and unreservedly agreed.

Wei Zheng was jealous of Wei Luo's close relationship with the sixth princess and had been determined to worm her way into being friends with Zhao Liuli too. To no avail, Zhao Liuli rarely appeared in palace banquets. Even if she did show, she usually didn't talk to anyone other than Wei Luo and the two sisters from Duke Zhen's residence. Towards other people, she always kept her distance. It was very difficult to come in contact with her.

Wei Zheng had tried to talk to Zhao Liuli a few times, but she had been ignored each time and she gradually stopped trying. She thought that Wei Luo had incited Zhao Liuli against her and this was why she was ignoring her. Actually, this wasn't true. Zhao Liuli had a naturally shy disposition and wasn't used to talking to strangers.

Now, she had the opportunity to get close to seventh princess Zhao Lin Lang, so Wei Zheng was naturally happy. If she could gain a close relationship with the seventh princess, she wouldn't lower her head in front of Wei Luo.

Wei Zheng's mental abacus was loud as she counted her chickens before they hatched. This was her main purpose in going to Zi Yu Villa. The second reason was naturally... She glanced at the small porcelain bottle in her hand.

Song Ru Wei had said that the capital's young noblemen from distinguished families would be holding a friendly gathering for poetry in Hua Fu Mountain, which was behind Zi Yu Villa. At that

time, Song Hui and many young nobles would be there for a total of two days and one night. By chance, they would be staying the night at Zi Yu Villa.

A few days ago, Wei Zheng heard that people from Count Zhong Yi's residence had come here to discuss Wei Luo and Song Hui's marriage. Wei Kun had put so much thought into Wei Luo's marriage, but he had never put any thought into her marriage! Wei Zheng felt very indignant. Why did Wei Luo always receive the best? Clearly, she was closer to Song Hui. If they were going to arrange a marriage between an older male cousin and younger female cousin, it should be her that should be getting married.

Song Hui treated her so well. Every time he saw her, he would smile gently. He liked her too, right?

Thinking of this, Wei Zheng felt that Wei Luo was gaining an advantage too easily.

Naturally, she wasn't resigned and wanted to go to Ginkgo Courtyard to consult with Du-shi. But, Du-shi hadn't left Ginkgo Courtyard in many years and wasn't clear about matters outside of the residence. Du-shi already had a difficult enough time protecting herself. How could she help her? Then, she had heard about this type of aphrodisiac from Yin Lou. She thought over the past and considered the future. In the end, she decided for Yin Lou to obtain this drug, then she would use it on Song Hui.

After he had possessed her body, he would have to marry her.

Wei Zheng stored the little porcelain bottle into her trousseau, closed the box, turned around, and asked Yin Lou, "If you dare to tell this to anyone, I'll sell you to the red light district."

Since Yin Lou knew an old woman from the red light district, she naturally knew what kind of place it was. It was a place with brothels, where men seek women for pleasurable love. She wouldn't even mention that the life there was exhausting. Every day, the women would have to receive different men. It was much

worse than being a servant girl. Yin Lou knelt down in horror and promptly declared her position, "Miss, be assured. Even if this matter rots in this servant's stomach, I won't tell anyone!"

Wei Zheng nodded, told her to rise, and said, "Recently, one of Wei Luo's personal servant girls asked about me. She's probably suspicious. Later, go outside and prepare medicine for me. If anyone asks, say the medicine is for me."

Yin Lou obediently nodded. Seeing that Wei Zheng didn't have any other orders, she bowed and left the room.

Wei Zheng sat inside her room and thought for a while. She was originally planning on going to Gingko Courtyard to visit Du-shi. However, now that she thought about, she would wait until the matter was settled before going. As long as she could marry into Count Zhong Yi's residence, she would be able to take her out of Gingko Courtyard and bring her to Count Zhong Yi's residence. Her mother wouldn't have to be locked away in that small courtyard anymore.

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After Wei Luo bought the present and returned home, she wanted to go to her room first to store the jade away, then bring the ivory pendant to Wei Chang Hong. Unexpectedly, she saw Chang Hong walking out of a room and the two of them met in the verandah. Wei Luo instinctively tried to hide the box behind her.

Wei Chang Hong was just about to go to Mister Qi's place to ask him for guidance on a few questions. Seeing Wei Luo looking guilty, he followed the movement of her hands and saw the red sandalwood box with decorative carvings. His eyes flashed as he looked at Wei Luo and slowly asked, "What's that?"

Although it wasn't their birthday yet, he had already given Wei Luo her gift. Wei Luo still hadn't given him his gift. Even though he hadn't asked about it, he hadn't forgotten.



Wei Luo knew that she wouldn't be able to conceal the box. She could only confess, "This is a gift for you. I especially went outside today to buy it."

Chang Hong curved his lips into a smile. On his left cheek, a shallow dimple was revealed. He was obviously in a good mood. "Can I see it?"

Wei Luo automatically shook her head. In addition to the ivory pendant, there was a white jade hairpin inside the box. If Chang Hong asked, how should she explain? She held the box tightly. Her eyes turned and without a change in her expression, she said, "Since it's a birthday gift, then of course, I have to wait until your birthday to give it you. You won't be surprised later if you see it now."

Chang Hong looked at her and reminded, "Ah Luo, I've already given your gift to you."

The implication was that he wanted her to give him his present now.

Wei Luo still refused. She thought of how she used to rub his head when they were children, but when she lifted her hand, she discovered that he was already a head taller than her and immediately stopped her action. Very resolutely, she said, "Anyways, you can't see it now."

## Chapter 90.2

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Clearly, they were the same age and had been born on the same day. So, why was Chang Hong so much taller than her? Wei Luo subconsciously compared and discovered that she only reached his shoulders. She looked at him and couldn't help thinking of another person. Zhao Jie was taller than Chang Hong. When she stood in front of Zhao Jie, she only reached his chest. Every time he kissed her, he had to bend down or wrap his arm around her waist and force her to cater to him by standing on her tiptoes

As she thought about this, Wei Luo started blushing.

Chong Hong was slightly lost and felt disappointed. But, it was fine. The gift was his and couldn't run away. He lifted his hand and stroked her forehead, then he asked, "Why is your face slightly red? Did you catch a cold from Wei Zheng?"

Wei Luo shook her head. Her little face was still red, "No... I just feel a bit warm."

She couldn't continue to stand out here with Chang Hong. Otherwise, she would expose herself. She moved to the side to let him go, "Aren't you going to see Mister Qi? If you go there late, Mister Qi might be resting. You should quickly go."

Chang Hong looked at her again. After convincing himself that she was okay, he left in the direction of Mister Qi's courtyard.

Wei Luo returned to her room, opened the box, and took the white jade hairpin out of the box. When she was buying it, she wasn't thinking calmly. Now, after buying it, she started to worry. Would she really give him this? If she kept it in her room and someone saw it, he or she would definitely feel suspicious. This was clearly a man's object and Chang Hong wouldn't be using this. Who could it belong to?

While she was holding the jade hairpin and letting her

imagination run wild, from behind her, Jin Lu walked inside while carrying a cup of silver needles and casually asked, "Miss, are you going to give this jade hairpin to Prince Jing?"

Startled, Wei Luo turned around and asked in panic, "Who said I would give this to him?"

Jin Lu, "..."

Wasn't Miss thinking of giving this hairpin to Prince Jing when she was buying it?

She and Bai Lan weren't stupid. They had known about Wei Luo and Zhao Jie's relationship a long time ago. They both thought that Zhao Jie was pretty good. He treated their Miss well and pampered her as if she was his beloved. They had never seen a man treasure a young girl like this. In addition, Zhao Jie's status and identify was very respectable. If their Miss married him, she definitely wouldn't suffer any grievances.

When they were inside the jade store, Wei Luo looked reluctant to part with this jade hairpin. Clearly, she had already selected and bought her gift for Young Master Chang Hong. If this hairpin wasn't for Prince Jing, then whom else could it be for?

Jin Lu had mercilessly exposed Wei Luo's thoughts. Wei Luo's pretty cheeks were red again. She felt slightly embarrassed.

She did want to give this to Zhao Jie. Zhao Jie had given her so many gifts and she had only given him a hua tiao puppy called Si Xi when she was seven. When Wei Luo was eleven, it had become sick and didn't recover. Half a month later, it had died. She had been thinking about giving him something else and thought of the jade ornament that Zhao Liuli had given Yang Zhen. If she gave him something that would be worn on his body, he would think of her whenever he saw her gift.

She sent Jin Lu out of the room and sat down on her couch by herself. She wrapped her arms around a purl pillow, curled her

body up, and buried her small face into the purl pillow. Only a red ear could be seen.

It seemed that she really did like Zhao Jie a lot...

Since the time he was injured and she realized that cared about him, she couldn't help thinking about him everyday. Actually, she liked his kisses. Her heart would tingle and soften when he was kissing her. Last time, in the carriage, when she had instinctively responded to him, he had frozen for a moment before holding her face and kissing her more intensely.

Even after living two lifetimes, she hadn't liked someone before, so she was a bit slow-witted in this area... When Zhao Jie suddenly kissed her a month ago, she felt confused and bewildered. So, she gritted her teeth and always refused him. But, after thinking about this for a month, she gradually realized it wasn't that she wanted to refuse him. It was only that she wasn't used to this feeling.

That day, when Zhao Jie was injured and was sitting in his bed while faintly smiling at her, her heart ached. This was the first time that she felt he had been gone for a long time and she missed him. Later, when Gao Dan Yang escorted her out of the residence and said those words to her, her heart was actually very unhappy. Why couldn't she go to Prince Jing's residence? Was Gao Dan Yang going to marry Zhao Jie? Was their relationship that had existed since they were children that good? She used to never care about things like this, but at that moment, her heart carefully considered everything. It was difficult to describe the complication emotions she was feeling.

She didn't want Zhao Jie to marry or have any contact with Gao Dan Yang. It wouldn't be okay for him to even say one word to her.

Wei Luo hugged the pillow and thought for a long time before falling asleep. In her dream, she and Zhao Jie were riding horses together inside a peach tree grove. The horses stepped on flower petals as they moved forward. There wasn't an end to the path.

Hailstones started to fall from the sky and one landed on her head. Her head slightly hurt. She clutched her head and softly called out to the person in front of her, "Big brother."

The person in front of her turned around. It wasn't Zhao Jie. It was clearly Chang Hong's expressionless face!

Shocked, she fell down from the horse and woke up.

When she opened her eyes, Chang Hong's face was right in front of her.

He curved two fingers and knocked her forehead. His expression didn't look good. Wei Luo had just woken up and dazedly thought, so this was the hailstone in her dream...

Chang Hong was standing in front of the couch and holding a white jade hairpin in his hand. With a complicated expression, he asked her, "Ah Luo, who are you giving this to?"

# Chapter 91.1

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Startled awake from her dream, Wei Luo looked at the jade hairpin in his hand. She didn't return to her senses for a while.

Once she was finally more aware, her mind and body were alarmed. She hadn't put the jade hairpin away before she fell asleep. And, Jin Lu and Bai Lan wouldn't move her things without her permission. Now, Chang Hong had discovered the jade hairpin. How should she explain? She lowered her head and rubbed her eyes to hide her guilty conscience. She looked left and right, then she asked him, "Why did you come here? Weren't you going to look for Mister Xue?"

Chang Hong stood up straight and pursed his thin lips. "The sky has already darkened. I heard from Jin Lu that you had napped for four to six hours and became worried that you were sick, so I came to your room to look."

When he had entered the room, he saw that the box had been placed on a Chinese cedar table with an eight immortal style. It was the box that Wei Luo had been holding earlier today.

Inside the open box, there was a white jade hairpin with a carved hornless dragon and an ivory pendant with a carved hornless dragon. He didn't pay attention to the ivory pendant. His attention was focused on the jade hairpin and his expression went through many changes. Ah Luo had bought a jade hairpin. Neither of them could use it. Who was she going to give it to? It was clearly a man's hairpin. Which man would she be giving this to? Was it her sweetheart?

Who was her sweetheart? Song Hui?

Wei Chang Hong's heart felt as if a large stone was blocking it. He felt gloomy and troubled. Count Zhong Yi's son had come here to discuss Ah Luo's engagement with Song Hui a few days ago. Ah Luo had grown up and would be getting married soon. Once she was

married, she would be living in Count Zhong Yi's residence. They would no longer be able to live in the same courtyard. He knew that this day would come and didn't say anything even though he felt a sense of loss. But today, after he saw the jade hairpin she had bought for Song Hui, he almost couldn't remain calm.

Seeing her marriage being arranged by their father and her giving a man a present were two completely different things.

Wei Luo looked at the window. It really was dusk and the courtyard outside was murky and dark. From the verandah, the light from a few octagonal-shaped lanterns penetrated their coverings and hazily lit her vermillion-lacquered table with spiral carvings and inlaid gold. Most of her sleepiness had disappeared. Her blinking dark eyes were like flashing stars. "I'm not sick... I was too tired from going outside today, so I slept a little bit longer."

Chang Hong knew that she was deliberately changing the topic. He sat down across from her and placed the jade hairpin on the vermillion-lacquered table with spiral carvings and inlaid gold. "Are you going to give this to Song Hui?"

Wei Luo blinked. Confused, she said, "En."

He didn't hear the surprise in her voice. He only felt lonely. The relationship between twins was closer than normal siblings. They had been born together and grew up together. Because they looked similar and had the same preferences, sometimes they would think the other person was their other self. Now, his other self was going to get married and he felt as if something was being taken away from him. His heart felt desolate and uneasy, but he couldn't do anything about it.

Chang Hong silently sat across from her for a long time before opening his mouth to say, "Ah Luo, do you like Song Hui?"

Wei Luo finally realized that he had misunderstood. This jade hairpin wasn't for Song Hui. She was already at the point where she wanted to cancel the engagement between Song Hui and her.

Why would she be giving him something? But, for now, she would continue to let him misunderstand. This way, she wouldn't have to exert effort to explain herself. With both hands, she held up her cheeks and didn't say anything.

Chang Hong thought she was tacitly agreeing. He stared at that jade hairpin as if it was Song Hui's face. One by one, he gouged out these words, "After you marry him, will you still remember me?"

Wei Luo couldn't resist lifting the corner of her mouth and making fun of him, "Regardless of whom I marry, I won't forget you. What are you thinking?"

Hearing this, he felt slightly at ease.

His mood didn't improve until Wei Luo coaxed him for a while.

As for that jade hairpin... It would be the best if she sent it off soon. The longer she kept it, the more likely other people will misunderstand. After she came back from Zi Yu Villa, she would plead with Wei Kun to cancel her engagement with Count Zhong Yi's family. If Song Hui wouldn't agree to cancel the engagement on his side, she could only bring it up herself.

She didn't know that Zhao Jie had already secretly put everything into order for her.

After Song Bai Ye considered this matter for three days, in order to save the hundreds of lives in the residence, he decided to cancel the engagement with Duke Ying's family. He called Song Hui to his room and started to talk about this matter.



## Chapter 91.2

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At Qing Xi Palace's Chen Hua Hall, Wei Luo was sitting on a carved wooden couch, holding a colorful teacup lid, and staring at a red coral in a bonsai container in the corner. She had been looking at it for over 15 minutes.

Zhao Liuli couldn't resist stretching her hand and waving it in front of Wei Luo. She said, "Ah Luo, what are you thinking about? You've been weird and absent-minded since you came here. If you're busy with something, you can go back home. You don't have to worry about me."

Wei Luo looked away from the red coral and slowly said, "I'm fine. What did you just say? Her Majesty called you over to say something? What did she say?"

Today, Mister Qi was occupied with something related to his family, so she, Wei Zheng, and Chang Hong didn't have class today. They were allowed to go out to play. After thinking for a moment, she had decided to go to the palace to talk with Zhao Liuli.

Zhao Liuli was naturally happy that Wei Luo was visiting her. She left what she had been doing to come to Chen Hua Hall to see her. But, she gradually realized that something was wrong. From the time that Liuli had arrived at Chen Hua Hall, she noticed that Wei Luo was absent-minded and looked as if there was something she wanted to say, but couldn't. This made Zhao Liuli extremely curious.

Naturally, Zhao Liuli wasn't able to continue their earlier conversation. She asked, "What exactly is bothering you? Why can't you tell me? I tell you everything!"

Wei Luo paused and thought of the reason why she had come here today. In the end, she had Jin Lu bring the item forward to Zhao Liuli's hand. "This... could you give this to older brother

Prince Jing for me?"

Zhao Liuli held the red sandalwood box with decorative carvings. At first, she was surprised. Soon after, she looked at her with bright eyes.

Was Ah Luo giving this to her imperial older brother? What was it? She was even happier than her imperial older brother.

"Can I open the box to look?" Zhao Liuli asked.

Thinking that this wasn't something that couldn't be seen by others, Wei Luo nodded and said, "You can look."

Zhao Liuli impatiently opened the box. She took out the jade hairpin, placed it on her hand, and looked at it from every angle as if this was her gift. Finally, she carefully put it back and praised, "It looks really good. My older brother will definitely like it." Actually, she wanted to say that as long as it was something from Ah Luo, her imperial older brother would definitely like it. Then, she thought of something and curiously asked, "Why don't you give this to my older brother yourself?"

Wei Luo drank a mouthful of tea, blew out her cheeks, and said, "I don't have opportunities to see him."

This was the truth. Zhao Jie had his own residence and had moved out of the palace a long time ago. Even if she came to the palace, it would be unlikely for her to see him. Even if she did see him, she couldn't give him a gift in a public place with numerous people. Other than going to the palace, Wei Luo had to obtain Wei Kun's permission to go to other places. It was really inconvenient. After thinking it over, she could only give Zhao Jie a gift with Zhao Liuli's help.

Hearing this, Zhao Liuli thought her words were reasonable. Looking as if she was an assistant bearing heavy responsibilities, she said, "Don't worry, I'll personally hand this over to him."

Wei Luo was amused by her seriousness. The corner of her

mouth curved up.

After saying this, Zhao Liuli continue to impatiently look at Wei Luo while sitting across from her. She was very curious about Wei Luo's relationship with Zhao Jie. Naturally, Zhao Liuli wouldn't dare to ask Zhao Jie about this matter and Zhao Jie wouldn't talk about this topic with her. She had been curious for the past several days. Today, Wei Luo wanted to give Zhao Jie a gift and her heart felt itchy. Finally, she couldn't stop herself from saying, "Ah Luo, will you become my imperial sister-in-law?"

Wei Luo blushed, "..."

Her words were too direct! Wei Luo was too stunned. Even after a long time, she still didn't know what to say!

Imperial sister-in-law? Their birthdays hadn't even been looked at. \*

\* (T/N: In historical times, before a couple could be married, a matchmaker would have to check if two people were compatible by looking at their birthdays and birth hours.)

After recovering from her surprise, she also felt that her question was too sudden. She curved her eyes and said, "Never mind. I shouldn't ask too much about your relationship with my older brother. I'll wait until you want to tell me."

Wei Luo let out a sigh in relief. Seeing that it wasn't early anymore, she decided it was time to go home. She stood up and dusted off her eight treasure style skirt with precious stone beads. Before she left, she thought of something. Her dazzling, bright eyes turned to look at Zhao Liu and she said, "If older brother Prince Jing comes to my home to propose marriage, I'll be your imperial sister-in-law."

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Soon after Wei Luo left, Zhao Liuli lied down on the couch and was reading a book by herself.

Yang Zhen had found this book for her outside of the palace. It had anecdotal stories about the pugilist world and interesting stories about the common folk. When she was bored, she would take it out to pass the time. Just as she finished reading a page, a palace servant girl came into the room to report, "Princess, His Highness Prince Jing is here."

Zhao Liuli was surprised for a moment and the book fell down onto the couch. She sat up and asked, "Imperial older brother came? Shouldn't he be keeping imperial mother company right now?"

Zhao Jie had come to palace this morning to pay respects to Empress Chen and also stayed to eat lunch with her. Zhao Liuli thought he wouldn't have time to come here, so she hadn't asked Wei Luo to stay longer. Who would have expected that he would be coming here and at such an early time?

Before Yun Zi had time to reply, Zhao Jie walked past the folding screen made of twelve red sandalwood pieces. He was wearing a long brocade robe.

She stood up and called out, "Imperial older brother..."

Zhao Jie's dark eyes looked around the room. Seeing that Wei Luo wasn't here, he realized that she had already returned home. He lowered his eyes. His eyes were like a hopeless abyss. "She left?"

Zhao Liuli nodded and remembered Wei Luo's request. She hastily picked up the red sandalwood box and presented it to him as if it was a valuable treasure. "Ah Luo asked me to give this to you. Imperial older brother, look."

Zhao Jie's eyes slightly moved. He opened the box to look. On top of the red silk, there was an exquisite and lustrous white jade hairpin with a carved hornless dragon. He looked at it for a long time before quietly asking, "Ah Luo gave this to me?"

Zhao Liuli nodded.

He suddenly closed the box, "When did she leave?"

Zhao Liuli said, "Not long ago. She's only been gone for a little bit. She probably just left the palace..."

Before she could finish her words, he had turned around and left Chen Hua Hall without any hesitation.

Zhao Liuli lifted up her skirt to chase after him and called out, "Imperial older brother, Ah Luo also said something else. She said, she would be my..."

Unfortunately, Zhao Jie had left too quickly. He didn't hear her words.

## Chapter 92.1

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Wei Luo was wearing an eight-treasure style, satin weave, blue robe with precious stone beads and a sash with a jade waist accessory. The jade accessory pleasantly jingled and the skirt swayed as she slowly walked. On the surface of the eight-treasure style brocade robe, the beads made from precious stones were streamed together like transient clouds in the sky.

The palace servant girls and eunuchs couldn't resist turning their heads to look at her. Most of the people recognized her. Duke Ying's family's Fourth Miss had become even more beautiful during the past several years. She had bright eyes, white teeth, and skin as white as snow. This teenage girl was like a peach tree's youthful and tender flower bud. It made people want to pluck her from the tree for a closer look and tear off her petals to see what she looked like when she blossomed.

When Zhao Zhang and Li Song saw her, she was far away and only her gradually fading back figure was left.

There was a remnant of a faint, delicate fragrance in the air. Before they could carefully smell and recognize the scent, it had already dispersed.

Standing on the steps, Zhao Zhang retracted his line of sight and said, "Ah Song, did you know that Count Zhong Yi's family's will cancel their engagement with Duke Ying's family?"

Li Song had been following the fading figure with a complicated gaze. Hearing Zhao Zhang words, he returned to his senses and asked in astonishment, "Cancel the engagement?"

Zhao Zhang turned around, slowly walked up the stairs, coldly snorted, and said, "You don't know yet, right? My dear second brother personally met with Song Bai Ye, threatened him with the southern Xuzhou's matter, and forced him to cancel the engagement. That cowardly Song Bai Ye immediately agreed." His

expression wasn't good as he gloomily said, "Does he think that this prince will lose to him without Duke Ying's assistance? He's underestimating this prince too much."

Not long ago, Zhao Zhang had discovered that someone had taken his book. He recently found out that the stolen book, which had information that could be used against him, had fallen into Zhao Jie's hands. He hadn't been able to sleep peacefully. Originally, he wanted to send people to get the book back so that even if Zhao Jie publicly said the contents of the books, no one would believe him. But, Zhao Jie was an old fox with a mind as deep as the ocean. No one knew where he hid the book. On one side, Zhao Zhang had to secretly fight him and on the other side, he had to defend against that book. He was truly over-extended.

Zhao Zhang thought Zhao Jie had broken the engagement between the two families for Duke Ying's power. Actually, he had only done this for Wei Luo.

Zhao Zhang walked forward two steps. When he turned his head, he discovered that Li Song was still standing in the same place with a perplexed expression. He didn't what he was thinking about. "Ah Song, why aren't you walking?"

Li Song returned to his senses. Underneath his thick eyelashes, his eyes were unfathomably deep. "You said they were going to cancel the engagement. Has it already been completed?"

At the mention of this, Zhao Zhang became angry. With his hands down at his sides and a malicious expression on his face, he said, "Not yet. But, it'll happen within the next two days. Song Bai Ye, that old fellow, is preparing for this matter. He's already told his son, Song Hui."

Li Song was silent for a while before he slowly asked, "Has Song Hui agreed?"

He remembered Song Hui. Whenever he looked at Wei Luo, his eyes were full of gentleness and warmth. His love and longing for

her was obvious. He had already waited so many years for her and looked forward to their marriage for so long. Would Song Hui agree to ending this engagement so suddenly?

Zhao Zhang disapprovingly said, "Does it matter if he doesn't agree? His parents have already decided. Would he dare to disobey?"

Then, not willing to continue talking about this topic, he turned around to continue walking up the stairs and left Li Song behind.

Li Song stood there for a moment, then started walking again to follow him.

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At the palace gate, Wei Luo arrived at her carriage. As she was about to lift up her skirt and step into the carriage, she suddenly heard the sound of horse's hooves. She turned around to look and saw Zhao Jie. He was wearing a blue robe with persimmon stem pattern and a hunting cloak and riding a fine horse. When he reached her, he tightened his grip on the reins and steadily stopped.

Zhao Jie didn't say a word and slowly led the horse closer to her. Before she had time to react, he leaned over, wrapped an arm around her waist, and she was suddenly brought onto the horse!

On the side, Jin Lu and Bai Lan cried out in alarm, "Miss!"

At this time, other than the guards at the gate who wouldn't say anything even if they saw something, there was no one outside the palace gate. Holding Wei Luo in his arm, he untied the moon white cloak embroidered with clouds that he was wearing, wrapped it around her body from head to feet, and looked at the two servant girls from the higher view, "I have words to say to Ah Luo. Go wait at Yu He's entrance for us. I'll bring her there in two hours."

Then, without waiting for their response, he pressed the horse's stomach to urge it forward and abruptly left.



The two people left behind, Jin Lu and Bai Lan, were depressed.

Wei Luo was leaning against his chest and couldn't see the outside scene. She twisted around and asked, "Big brother, where are you taking me?"

Zhao Jie tugged at the part of the cloak that was covering her head and blocked her small face that beckoned people towards her. Instead of answering her, he said, "What's making that noisy sound?"

The two people were riding on a horse. In addition to the sound of the wind and the conversations from the people they passed by, a jingling sound could be heard from time to time. Zhao Jie slightly furrowed his eyebrows. This sound swept away the thoughts he had originally been mulling over countless times in his heart. It was really bothersome.

Wei Luo was calm and honestly said, "It's the jade accessory on my skirt."

Hearing this, Zhao Jie lowered his head and opened the cloak to see. Indeed, there was a jade accessory with semicircular ornaments. The horse was running quickly and the sound from the colliding jade would naturally be loud. He reached his hand out to her waist and after a few moments, he removed the jade accessory and casually flung it down on the road, "Be good, don't wear this anymore."

Wei Luo was startled by his action, but it was too late to stop him. In the blink of an eye, they had already traveled far away. She saw her jade accessory being picked up by a passerby and immediately lamented, "What are you doing? I really like that jade accessory!"

Zhao Jie knew that she was a little miser. Hearing her words, he quietly laughed, placed his chin on her head, "This prince wants to quietly talk with you." Seeing the young girl pouting her pink lips and looking distressed, he could resist pecking her lips. "When we

go back, I'll buy better looking ones for you. I'll buy twenty of them, okay?"

Wei Luo angrily glared at him. Her small beautiful face was overflowing with anger, "I want a hundred."

The smile on Zhao Jie's lips deepened. They had already past the city gates and were on a small, remote road with very few pedestrians. They were the two most conspicuous people on the road. He slowly stopped the horse next to a poplar tree and lowered his head to directly look at her bright eyes. "After you marry me, even a thousand won't be a problem."

Wei Luo's anger simmered down. Feeling slightly angry and shy, she simply turned her head to look at the tree instead of him.

Zhao Jie took out the jade hairpin she had given him. As if he was denouncing a crime, he asked, "Why didn't you give this to me yourself?"

## Chapter 92.2

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Wei Luo turned her head back and just realized that Liuli had already handed the item over to him. No wonder he had hurriedly chased after her. She pursed her pink lips and tried to cover up the truth by saying, "I didn't buy this especially for you. When I was looking for a gift for Chang Hong, I saw this. It looked nice, so I bought it in passing." Her words only made the matter more conspicuous. She raised her long eyelashes to look at him with her large, glittering eyes. "Do you like it?"

Zhao Jie couldn't resist scratching her little nose. "I'll like anything if it's a gift from you."

Wei Luo didn't know how to reply. She slowly said, "Oh." She didn't want to seem too happy, but her lips involuntarily curved up into a big smile.

Zhao Jie placed the jade hairpin onto her palm, "Ah Luo, help this prince put this on."

He currently had an ivory hairpin on his head that looked more expensive than her gift. Wei Luo had only inserted a hairpin for Zhao Liuli once. This would be the first time she did this for a man. She straightened up and the cloak slid down to reveal a dainty and delicate body. But, she still couldn't reach the top of his head. "Lean over and lower your head more."

Zhao Jie's phoenix eyes smiled. He listened to her words and lowered his head.

One hand held his jade guan hat with a hornless dragon pattern in place and the other hand took out the ivory hairpin from his hair and replaced it with the white jade hairpin. Although this was the first time she did this, she did a good job imitating the correct form. After she earnestly scrutinized her handiwork, she curved her almond eyes, "It looks really good."

Zhao Jie stared at her. His eyes gradually deepened. Before she had time to put away her smile, he hugged her and sucked and nipped at her lips to vent the emotion in his heart.

Wei Luo made a noise of surprise, then she pushed against his chest with both of her hands in an instinctive refusal.

They were on a road in broad daylight. This was a public place. Did he want other people to see them?

Zhao Jie didn't let go of her. Sticking close to her soft lips, he asked, "Why did you decide to give a present to this prince?"

Wei Luo twisted her head to hide. He caught her and lightly nipped her lips. He had an attitude of unwilling to give up until he received her answer. "Ah Luo, why?"

Wei Luo had been firmly confined by him. Her body was entirely covered by his scent. "No reason... I thought it looked good, so I gave it to you."

Zhao Jie kept pushing, "Then, why didn't you give it to someone else?"

Her thick eyelashes quivered. Her conscience was at its guiltiest. She opened and closed her mouth and was preparing to confess. But, at this moment, she saw a glimpse of a couple passing by them in an oxcart from her peripheral vision. The peasant woman was looking at them with a smile in her eyes. Her expression was mocking and teasing. Wei Luo's face rapidly became red. She threw herself at Zhao Jie's chest and pinched his arm, "Not here... Other people will see"

Zhao Jie involuntarily laughed. He deliberately distorted the meaning of her words, "Okay, we'll go inside the woods then."

Wei Luo didn't utter a word or sound.

They rode the horse into the woods. After seeing that there was no one else around, Wei Luo lifted her head from his chest.

Zhao Jie's hand was around her waist and the other hand was holding the reins. He huskily said into her ears, "And you said you didn't like me... little liar."

Wei Luo was unexpectedly obedient and didn't refute his words.

He bit her ear and slowly nibbled on it. His voice became quieter and quieter, "Little liar..." His hand wasn't honest and went up from her waist to grasp her dainty and delicate peach. He almost couldn't stop himself from possessing her here.

Wei Luo whimpered. That area was still sore. How could it be touched?! She tried to remove his hand and speak about a serious matter. "When we go back, I'll tell daddy... to cancel the engagement between me and older brother Song Hui."

She didn't know yet that Zhao Jie had talked to Song Bai Ye, so she was wholeheartedly thinking about canceling her engagement. She didn't know that this engagement had already reached the end of the road with no way to continue further.

Zhao Jie smiled and comforted the girl in his arms. "Don't worry. Before three days have passed, Count Zhong Yi's son will go to your home to rescind the marriage agreement."

Wei Luo and Song Hui weren't formally engaged. It was only an informal agreement before Wei Luo was born. If Count Zhong Yi's family rescinded the marriage agreement, at most it would be them not keeping their promise, it wouldn't harm Wei Luo's reputation.

Wei Luo curiously turned her head and directly looked at him, "Why? What did you say to Count Zhong Yi's family?"

Zhao Jie didn't tell her. He touched her forehead and said, "Anyways, after you come back from Zi Yu Villa, you just have to wait until you marry this prince."

Wei Luo wanted to continue to ask, but his hand tightened around her and he quietly said to her, "This prince heard that if

you rub it, it'll stop feeling sore. Ah Luo, do you want to try?"

Wei Luo's face was so red that it looked like she was dripping blood. Who wanted to try? If she was match for him in physical strength, she really wanted push him off the horse!

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On the sixth day of the sixth month, a group of people traveled together to Zi Yu Villa at Wang Su Mountain.

Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong were sharing a carriage with Zhao Liuli. The three girls were about the same age and Liang Yu Rong had an extroverted and easy-going personality. Very quickly, she became more familiar with Zhao Liuli. On the way to Zi Yu Villa, the three of them talked, joked, and laughed. They reached Wang Su Mountain without noticing.

Zi Yu Villa was built on a mountainside and faced a large body of water. The area was surrounded by unbroken mountain ranges. It took four hours to go from the bottom of the mountain to the villa. When they arrived at Zi Yu Villa's entrance, it was already dusk. The rosy clouds set each other off as the sun started to set in the western horizon. The orange light that was scattered over half of the mountain had a roundabout beauty.

Wei Luo and the others came down from their carriages and followed the villa's servants to their rooms.

Wei Luo would be staying in the third room from the east side at Jin Tai Courtyard. One room separated her and Liang Yu Rong. As a princess, Zhao Liuli would be staying in her own separate courtyard that wasn't far from them. They wouldn't have to walk far to see each other.

The inner room and outer room weren't small. They had been properly cleaned and were completely free of dust. Wei Luo walked inside. Just as she was going to have Jin Lu and Bai Lan bring her baggage inside, Wei Zheng came over, stood at the doorway, and

seemed to be preparing to discuss something, "Fourth older sister."

She rarely took the initiative to talk to Wei Luo and was even less likely to call her "Fourth older sister." She probably wasn't up to anything good. Wei Luo turned her head to look at her and wasn't moved by her address, "Fifth younger sister, is there something you want to say?"

Wei Zheng lowered her head and twisted the handkerchief in her hands, "I want to change rooms with you."

Not in a hurry to refuse, Wei Luo said, "Oh, why?"

She rarely lowered her head in front of Wei Luo. It seemed as if she was different person. Not only was her head lowered, even her tone was sweet as she said, "The bed in my room is facing the window. I'm not used to it... Could you change rooms with me?"

Wei Luo's lips curved up in a smile and she thoughtfully asked, "I didn't know you have this type of habit. What's wrong with facing the window?"

She pursed her lips, overlooked the displeasure she felt from Wei Luo's mocking, and continued, "I can't fall asleep if the bed is facing a window. I'll be scared at night."

In fact, changing rooms wouldn't be a difficult thing. Wei Luo merely wanted her to suffer for a little bit. She walked towards the doorway, "Has fifth younger sister done something shameful? What's there to be scared of?"

Wei Zheng lifted her head to look at her. Her eyes were red. It wasn't clear whether the redness was from being angry at Wei Luo or from genuine fear, "I..." She shed her arrogant and despotic manner and pretended to be a pitiful, innocent white flower. It looked very realistic.

Wei Luo knew that it wasn't as simple as her being afraid and wanted to see what trick she was trying. Having achieved her objective, Wei Luo agreed, "Since fifth younger sister is afraid, we

can change rooms. It's only because you're the one that's asking that I'm willing to change. If it's someone else, I might not agree."

The implication was that she wanted her to remember this favor.

Wei Zheng internally wanted to grit her teeth, but her face only showed a grateful appearance as she said, "Thank you fourth older sister. I'll definitely express my thanks to you after we return home."

Before Wei Luo left, she profoundly looked at her. That glance was meaningful and chilly. For a moment, Wei Zheng thought she had figured something out.

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After they changed their rooms, Wei Luo was closer to Liang Yu Rong. Only a wall separated their rooms.

After they respectively unpacked their stuff, Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong prepared to go to courtyards on the eastern side to look for Zhao Liuli.

Just as they walked out of Jin Tai Courtyard, they saw a vermillion-lacquered, flat-roofed carriage parked outside. Wearing a green summer robe, Li Xiang came down from the carriage while talking to Li Song. Li Song was wearing a deep black robe with a treasure flower design.

Li Song's hand was already mostly healed. The bandages had been removed and he could do most normal activities without problem.

Li Song's eyes were looking down as he said something. When he looked up, he saw Wei Luo walking. She was wearing a moon white gauzy top and a colorful skirt with red plum flowers. There was a wonderful smile on her apricot-like face and her cheeks look like peaches. She was talking to Liang Yu Rong, "The scenery from the back of the mountain looks pretty good. Let's go there to take a look..."



His fingers twitched. His heart couldn't resist feeling moved. He wanted stop her here. But, his face didn't show any of his feelings.

Before he had time to say anything, she passed by him as if she hadn't seen him.

## Chapter 93.1

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Actually, Wei Luo did see Li Song. She was only pretending that she didn't.

She hadn't seen Li Song since that time in Duke Ding's bamboo forest. This was good. If he didn't seek her out and provoke her, she wouldn't do anything against him either. If he kept bothering her, then she wouldn't be polite towards him.

Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong arrived at Yu Quan Courtyard. The palace servant girls were currently busy unpacking things and Zhao Liuli was sitting outside and drinking tea underneath a parasol tree. Seeing the two of them coming over, she gestured for them to sit down and personally poured two cups of tea for them. "This Zi Yu villa's specialty tea, yang xian tea. It has a slightly stronger taste than long jing tea. Try it."

Wei Luo picked up the white teacup with brightly colored lotus flowers and had a sip of the tea. It tasted sweet and pure with a slightly bitter aftertaste. It was pretty good.

Liang Yu Rong also had a sip. Seeing that Zhao Liuli wasn't busy, she suggested, "Want to go to the back of the mountain to walk around? There's a poetry gathering there today."

Duke Ding's third young master, Gao Cong Xun, was holding a friendly poetry gathering at Chun Yin and had invited many classmates and young masters from influential families. Song Hui and Liang Yu had also received an invitation. The gathering would be very lively. Many young women from influential families had already gone over to join in the excitement. Wei Luo hesitated for a moment. She didn't really want to go. It would feel awkward if she met Song Hui. She didn't know how to explain this, so she said, "It'll be dark soon. Let's not go..."

Liang Yu Rong disapprovingly looked at her and grabbed her and Zhao Liuli's sleeves to pull them up. "The sun only just started to

move towards the west. It won't be dark for a while. Let's go. Even if we don't go see the poetry gathering, it'll still be good to walk around the mountain. I heard there's a vast stretch of maple trees at the back of the mountain. When the light from the glowing sunset illuminates the trees, who knows how beautiful they'll look?!"

Wei Luo didn't want to ruin her excitement. After hesitating for a while, she still nodded her head in agreement. They walked towards the back of the mountain with their personal servant girls following them.

There was a pagoda at the back of the mountain. Curtains on three sides surrounded the pagoda. The remaining side of the pagoda was facing Chun Yin. There was a large distance between the two buildings. If they tried, they could barely see what was happening in the other building.

There were a few young ladies from noble families sitting inside the pagoda and they seemed to be chatting. Occasionally, they would glance at the building across from them. Although they couldn't hear what the young men were saying, it was still nice to be able to see the elegant young men with their own eyes

When Zhao Liuli and her group arrived, one after another, girls in white silk tops and pleated skirts saluted her, "Greetings Princess Tianji."

Zhao Liuli raised her hand to indicate that they could rise. She had gotten tired from walking here with Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong, so she sat down at stone table to rest for a while.

Zhao Liuli's health wasn't good. She couldn't stand temperature that was too cold or too hot, so she would come to Zi Yu Villa for summer holidays and could be considered familiar with the landscape here. She knew that they would see Chun Yin before they walked to the maple tree grove that Liang Yu Rong had mentioned. They would still have to walk for a while to reach the

maple tree grove, so she wanted to take this opportunity to lead the two of them here before the poetry gathering ended and the people left.

Otherwise, it would be too embarrassing to directly encounter the people as they started to walk outside after the poetry gathering ended.

They hadn't rest for long time before Zhao Liuli stood up and said to them, "There's still a long way until we reach the maple tree grove, do you still want to go see it?"

Since they had already walked here, there wasn't a reason to go back. Liang Yu Rong naturally wanted to go.

And so, Zhao Liuli continued to lead them in that direction.

As luck would have it, just as they were walking past Chun Yin's entrance, the poetry gathering inside ended! They heard the sound of many footsteps before seeing the young men gradually walking out of the building. There was a wide range of expressions from faint smiles to satisfied looks to unhappy and dejected expressions. They were quite noisy until they saw the three girls at the entrance. As they looked from left to right, each girl was more beautiful than the previous one. The girl on the right was wearing a colorful skirt with red plum flowers. Her eyes were beautiful and her face was a masterpiece. In front of her, the young men immediately lost their voices and were quiet as they left with blushing faces.

A few of the young masters from distinguished families recognized Princess Tianji. One after another, they cupped their hands to salute Zhao Liuli.

Zhao Liuli had failed in trying to avoid this large group of people. Having to suddenly face so many people, she was rather shy. With a blushing face, she told them they could forego the formality of saluting and secretly held Wei Luo's hand tighter. She was scared of strangers and really wanted to run away. When faced with

strangers, her body would become tense, her hands would become sweaty, and she gradually couldn't bear to face these people. She looked around for Yang Zhen to help her. Unfortunately, Yang Zhen had to be hidden to protect her. He couldn't show himself. Even knowing that she was facing something difficult, he couldn't take her away in front of this group of people.

Zhao Liuli took a step back. Just as she was about to hide behind Wei Luo, a voice spoke and gave her a way out, "Princess, why are you here? Are you on your way to see the maple trees?"

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The owner of that voice was a young man wearing a solid deep blue robe without decorative embroidery. He looked to be around eighteen years old. His straightforward appearance was handsome and elegant. He was Duke Ding's family's Third Young Master, Gao Cong Xun, the person that had arranged the poetry gathering today. He had met Zhao Liuli and talked and played together with her a few times when they were young children. After they grew up, he didn't have any contact with her. So, at the moment, Zhao Liuli didn't recognize him.

There was also a person next to him. It was Song Hui.

Song Hui was wearing a robe with the color of the sky after it rained. His tall figure slowly walked down the stairs. He followed Gao Cong Xun's line of sight. When he saw Wei Luo standing outside of Chun Yin, his body stiffened and he stopped walking.

Gao Cong Xun didn't notice his strange behavior. He walked forward to Zhao Liuli and cupped one fist in his other hand, "Greetings Princess Tianji."

After indicating that he could forgo formalities, there was a pause until she said, "We passed by Chun Yin on the way to the maple tree grove. We weren't intentionally trying to disturb the people here."

Gao Cong Xun smiled, "What's the big deal? I should be asking Your Highness to not blame my schoolmates for bothering you."

After all, these two people were related. Zhao Liuli wasn't as nervous talking to him as she was with other people. After saying a few words with him, she wanted to leave and continue walking.

Gao Cong Xun didn't try to stop her.

## Chapter 93.2

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Song Hui had been standing behind him this entire time and looking at Wei Luo, who was next to Zhao Liuli. His expression held a profound sadness. He had lost a lot of weight and he look somewhat haggard. Seeing that Wei Luo was about to leave, he finally couldn't stop himself from walking forward and hoarsely asking her, "Younger sister Ah Luo, can we go somewhere else to talk?"

Wei Luo paused. She had known that she couldn't avoid this scene. She looked at Song Hui and forced herself to smile as she asked, "Older brother Song Hui, is there something that can't be said here?"

Song Hui's tone was gloomy as he said, "I want to privately speak with you."

Fortunately, at this time, everyone else had already left Chun Yin. Gao Cong Xun was the only person left. Seeing that the scene in front of him wasn't good, he cupped one fist in his other hand and discreetly left.

Seeing Gong Cong Xun leaving and thinking that the two of them would be married soon, Liang Yu Rong thought it would be fine for them to speak privately, so she led Zhao Liuli away from the couple so they could have a vacated area. However, Zhao Liuli knew about Wei Luo and Zhao Jie's relationship and was worried. As they walked, she turned her head, "Ah Luo... "

Wei Luo's head was lowered and she was looking at her shoes.

Song Hui could only see the black hair on the top of her head. There were black circles underneath his sorrowful eyes. He had lost a lot of weight in a short period of time. It was if this was his last look before he fell into an abyss. Along with the hopelessness, there was also unwillingness and desire to struggle. He opened and closed his mouth. It took him a long time until he was able to say a

single word, "Ah Luo... My father has already brought up rescinding the engagement with Duke Ying."

Before he had left his home today, his father was already preparing to go to Duke Ying's residence to rescind the engagement and apologize.

He didn't go with his father. He was probably scared of confronting this reality.

Song Hui felt as if there was a dagger in his heart. He wasn't willing to let her go. On the evening that Song Bai Ye said he couldn't marry Wei Luo, he had kneeled outside for an entire night to beg his father to take back his decision. But, his action was useless. No matter what, Song Bai Ye couldn't agree and had said this marriage definitely had to be ended. Song Hui felt as if someone had scooped out his heart. There didn't seem to be a reason for why this misfortune had happened.

He wanted to see Wei Luo, but he was also scared to see her. He was worried that she would say more cruel words to him. That feeling was worse than having his heart gouged out by a knife. He wouldn't be able to endure it, so he wanted to avoid her. But even hiding from her was useless, all of his emotions surged up violently as soon as he saw her today. He really wanted to hug her. He wanted to have her, marry her, and bring her home to love dearly.

Wei Luo had already heard about this from Zhao Jie, so she wasn't too surprised, but she hadn't expected it would be so quick.

Her sound of acknowledgement was almost inaudible.

Song Hui clenched his fist. The previously gentle and elegant young man had become dispirited and depressed. His voice held a plea that he wasn't aware of as he said, "Ah Luo, why don't you want to marry me? I'll treat you very well."

Wei Luo didn't look at him. After a long, she slowly said, "I only think of you as an older brother... I... I don't have romantic



feelings towards you."

Song Hui's body trembled and he seemed about to fall over.

Wei Luo instinctively wanted to support him. Her hands had already reached out halfway before she slowly drew them back. "The reason I want to end our engagement isn't because of older brother Song Hui... Older brother Song Hui is really good. I'm sorry. I should have said this earlier." Looking at his current state, she felt somewhat guilty. She wanted to comfort him, but she didn't know where to start. If she said too much, she would be giving him hope. It would be better if she didn't say anything.

Song Hui supported himself with a nearby stone table. He was holding onto the table so hard that his fingers turned white.

His face was pale and he didn't recover for a long time. Eventually, he turned around and walked away without saying anything.

His back figure blended into the mountain's green cedar trees. Each of his steps were exceedingly slow. In the end, he disappeared from Wei Luo's line of sight.

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After the sun set and the moon and scattered stars appeared, there was a banquet at the lake pavilion at the back of Zi Yu Villa.

Most of the people attending the banquet were the young men who had attended the poetry gathering during the day. They were all in high spirits and happily playing drinking word games. Song Hui didn't have a high tolerance for alcohol. Until today, he would usually stop after drinking a few cups during these type of events. But today, for some unknown reason, he would drink the wine in the cup in one gulp whenever someone proposed a toast. It was very different from his usual restraint. Although the people near him were puzzled, they didn't think too much of it. They all thought he was merely in a good mood as he drank more and more.

They didn't know that it was because he was feeling depressed.

Not much later, Song Hui felt somewhat dizzy and delirious.

In the end, he still had some sense left and knew that he would make fool of himself if he kept drinking, so he stood up and bid everyone farewell. He was planning on going back to his room so he could rest. Just after he passed through a jiu qu qiao, a servant girl that had been underneath a willow tree came rushing over to him. It seemed as if she had been waiting for him for a long time. "Heir Song."

He stopped. Through the light from the moon, he was barely able to see the appearance of the servant girl. She looked like Wei Zheng's personal servant girl.

The servant girl continued, "Fifth Miss wanted me to pass on a message. Could you please come to Jin Tai Courtyard? Fifth Miss has something she wants to tell you."

# Chapter 94.1

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Song Hui froze. He thought he had misheard.

Wei Zheng wanted to meet him at this time?

He felt very dizzy. He had never been this unrestrained with drinking wine. His entire body didn't feel okay. It took him a long time to think of a reply to her words. He rubbed his eyebrows and his voice was shockingly hoarse as he asked, "Why is younger sister Ah Zheng looking for me?"

Yin Lou glanced at the lake pavilion. The people there were still drinking and laughing. No one was looking over here and there wasn't a servant boy at Song Hui's side. So she mustered up her courage and walked forward to support him, "Miss didn't say, but it seemed urgent. Heir Song, come with me to talk to her..."

Although Song Hui had drunk too much, it wasn't to the point that he couldn't walk. He waved her away, staggered two steps away, and with great difficulty stabilized himself. He lowered his head, tried to become more alert, and said, "Bring me over there then."

Yin Lou's eyes showed an an imperceptible happy expression, properly moved away to lead the way, and said, "Heir, please follow me."

Song Hui didn't say much as he followed behind her.

There were lanterns everywhere in Zi Yu Villa. Every one hundred paces, there was a lit lantern on the center of the upright stone pillars in Zi Yu Villa. Every courtyard was brightly illuminated. Even the pebbles underneath their feet could be clearly seen. There was some distance between Jin Tai Courtyard and the lake pavilion. The young women were staying at Jin Tai Courtyard because it was farther away from the lake pavilion. After they passed through a cobblestone path and a long verandah,

they reached a beautiful peony flowerbed. Jin Tai Courtyard was right behind the flowerbed.

After this period of walking, Song Hui was more clear-headed, but he still wasn't completely sober.

His head was slightly dropping. His eyes usually held a smile that was as gentle as a spring breeze. But right now, there was only loneliness and loss in his eyes. He thought of the words that Wei Luo has said during the day and his lips curved into a bitter smile.

He had been engaged to Wei Luo since he was a child. His parents had told him about her when he was six years old. When she grew up, she would marry him and become his wife. They would be together for an entire lifetime and reach old age together. At that time, he wasn't sure what marriage meant and only knew that he could never throw her away. They would be together in life and death. She was his little tail that would always be with him. He had to take good care of her and never let her suffer. Later on, when taking care of her gradually became a habit, he endured hardships for her gladly and his heart only had her. No one else could enter his eyes and gain his notice.

From the bottom of his heart, he had contentedly waited for the day they would get married. But, she suddenly told him that she didn't want to marry him and that she never had any romantic feelings towards him.

She has someone that she likes...

That person wasn't him.

Originally, Song Hui had thought that as long as he didn't agree to end their engagement, she would definitely develop feelings for him in the future after they were married and he lovingly took care of her. Unfortunately, he was only dreaming. If it wasn't meant to be, it wasn't meant to be. He didn't even have a chance to try to move her heart. Their engagement had turned into nothing and he remained a single person. All of this had been as futile as trying to

scoop up water in a bamboo basket. One person was full of warm feelings and the other person was completely indifferent.

Song Hui continued to be preoccupied with his thoughts during the walk here. His mind was full of Wei Luo and there wasn't any space for anyone else. To the extent that when he heard Wei Zheng was looking for him, he didn't think too much before agreeing.

Yin Lou led him into Jin Tai Courtyard, then she stopped at a banyan tree. There wasn't anyone else next to the tree. She didn't see Wei Zheng and said, "My family's Miss isn't here yet. Heir, please wait here for a moment. She'll be here soon."

Song Hui didn't think twice about her words. His head was feeling more and more painful and there was even a rarely seen exhaustion on his face. He leaned against the tree trunk and closed his eyes without saying a word.

On the side, Yin Lou quietly scrutinized him and probingly asked, "Heir, were you drinking wine before?"

He didn't feel like replying and only quietly made a sound of a agreement.

He was truly a person as gentle as water. No wonder Fourth and Fifth Miss both liked him. Fifth Miss was willing to give up her reputation to obtain him... In her mind, Yin Lou quietly thought, if Fifth Miss succeeded tonight and married him, she would definitely bring her as one of the servant girls that were part of the dowry. The status of a dowry servant girl was high. Perhaps, she would even be able to personally serve him. If she was fortunate enough to gain his interest, she might even be able to become his concubine... Her appearance wasn't bad. Would he be attracted to her? Yin Lou's mind twisted and turned. Soon, her thoughts had traveled far.

She quickly returned to her senses. Right now, she had to focus on helping Fifth Miss accomplish her goal. She would only have a chance if Fifth Miss succeeded. Seeing that Song Hui wasn't

speaking, she thought of the words that Wei Zheng had told her to say. She pretended to be anxious as she said, "Why isn't Miss here yet... The distance between here and Xu Shi Mountain is far. Perhaps, she was delayed on the way here. My family's Miss's room is on the eastern side of the courtyard. Heir, please wait here for a moment. This servant will go there to look."

Then, she seemed to suddenly remember something. She tapped her forehead and said, "Fourth Miss didn't seem well after she returned from the back of the mountain today. My Miss went over to her room to check up on her. That's probably why she's a bit late."

Song Hui's body slightly stiffened. He couldn't help asking, "Is Ah Luo sick?"

Yin Lou nodded as if her illness was very serious. She said, "There was something dirty at the back of Xu Si Mountain. I heard that Fourth Miss wasn't well when she came back and her face didn't look good."

Then, she quietly examined Song Hui's expression. As expected, he looked worried. She internally sighed. Fourth Miss was the one that Song Heir cared about the most. When she recently mentioned that Fifth Miss wanted to talk to him because she had a pressing matter, there wasn't any change in his expression. But as soon as he heard that Fourth Miss wasn't feeling well, he immediately became anxious.

She didn't know if Fourth Miss was truly sick or not. But, she had seen with her own eyes that Wei Luo's face didn't look good when she returned from the back of the mountain.

Yin Lou pointed at one of the rooms and said, "The lights in Fourth Miss's room were put out a while ago. She's probably sleeping because she's not feeling well."

She didn't continue talking about this. She started walking towards the eastern side. "I'm going to go look for Fifth Miss. Heir,

please wait here for a moment."

## Chapter 94.2

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Standing underneath the banyan tree, Song Hui looked at Wei Luo's room and didn't move for a long time.

Was she sick? She had looked fine during the day. Why did she suddenly become sick in the evening? Was it serious? Had a doctor come over to look at her? Song Hui clearly didn't want to think about her anymore, but he couldn't help being concerned. His heart couldn't resist softening as soon as he thought of her beautiful, little face looking sick and pitiful while saying, "I don't feel well."

In the end, he couldn't give up on her. He had already become used to worrying about her over the past several years. Giving up on her was like trying to separate his flesh and blood; he couldn't do it, much less in a short period of time.

He didn't see Yin Lou returning after waiting for fifteen minutes. After hesitating for a while, he still walked towards Wei Luo's room in the end.

The lights from the eight-sided lanterns hanging in the verandah weren't very bright. A gust of cool wind blew by and his shadow swayed along with the lanterns. He stood directly in front of her door and started to raise his hand to knock on the door.

When his hand was half-raised, he abruptly became clear-headed and stopped.

What was he doing? This was her bedroom. How could he enter it in the middle of the night? Was he trying to damage her reputation?

If he was worried about her condition, wouldn't it be fine if he came back tomorrow morning?

In addition, everything had already been clearly said during the day. Since they would no longer get married, then what reason did



he have to be worried for her? Even if he went inside, it wasn't like their relationship could be recovered. She had someone that she liked. Right now, she probably didn't want to see him. He shouldn't put her in a difficult position.

He stood in front of her door and didn't move for a long time.

So much time passed that his hand had become numb. He put his hand down, turned around, and started to walk away.

Wei Luo said that she only thought of him as an older brother. What kind of brother would enter her bedroom in the middle of the night? Since they weren't fated to be together, he should give up on his hopes. It would be better to have a clean break from now on.

Could he still be concerned about her in the future? When he thought about this question, his feet stopped. Soon, he faintly smiled and continued walking away. He could only secretly care about her in his heart. He no longer had the right and privilege to care about her.

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After Song Hui left, Jin Tai Courtyard sunk into quietness again.

Not much time later, a person came out from behind a banyan tree.

A deep black robe with a treasure pattern was wrapped around his handsome and tall figure. The moonlight above his head illuminated his elegant and exquisite face. Underneath the white light, the small birthmark at the corner of his eye increased his seductive beauty. His sword-like eyebrows looked valiant. His bright and piercing star-like eyes looked honest. When he looked at people, his eyebrows would be slightly raised. He gave off the feeling of unrulyness and unable to be untamed. It was Li Song.

Li Song had been standing in the shadows and hadn't been discovered by anyone.

Previously, he had been leaning against a wall and had heard the conversation between Song Hui and a servant girl. He found out that Wei Luo was sick.

He looked at the dark room that wasn't far away. After pondering for a long time, he still walked forward in the end.

There were many things he wanted to ask her. For example, was her engagement with Song Hui really canceled? Was she in a relationship with Zhao Jie? How far have they progressed? Have they shared a bed together? The more he thought, the harder it was to repress the anger and shock in his chest. Clearly, he was the person that had the least right to ask these questions. After all, the two of them would feel annoyed just looking at the other person. Regardless of who she had a relationship with, it wasn't any of his business. But, he couldn't help himself. Even though they were at a state of mutual hostility as soon as they saw each other, he still wanted to see her and talk with her.

He clenched his hand tighter around a golden emerald hairpin as step by step, he walked to Wei Luo's room. He decided to return this item to her tonight. After he returned it to her, he wouldn't continue to be bothered and concerned about her. If he didn't constantly look at this thing, he wouldn't keep thinking about her and his thoughts of wanting her wouldn't become more intense.

He stood in front of her door and knocked on it. There wasn't any response.

Was she asleep?

After hesitating for a moment, he pushed open her door and walked into her room.

The inside of the room was dark. A sweet fragrance entered his nose. There wasn't even a servant girl inside the absolutely silent room. Didn't she say Wei Luo was sick? Why wasn't there anyone here to take care of her? Li Song furrowed his eyebrows. In a few steps, he reached her inner room and went past the divider screen

with a landscape painting. He was barely able to see her bed using the bright moonlight that passed through the window,

There was a person lying on the bed with loose hair. Her small back was facing him and she seemed especially frail. It made him immediately halt.

At this moment, she looked really obedient without any of the icy ruthlessness and disgust that she usually showed when looking at him. Her child-like fragility made his heart tremble.

The person on the bed was covered in a thin green blanket decorated with birds. She seemed to have awakened from the sound of his steps. Thinking that he was a servant girl, she coughed, groaned, and quietly muttered, "Water.... Water."

This was the first time that Li Song had burst into a girl's bedroom. He really didn't have any experience. At first, he had been somewhat nervous, but he calmed down after hearing her words. Although this soft voice sounded nice, it was still different from Wei Luo's voice. Wei Luo's voice was even softer. It was so soft that it could enter a person's bones. It wasn't like this meticulous voice. Just as Li Song wanted to continue thinking, the person on the bed coughed again and said more urgently, "Jin Lu, bring me water..."

Li Song knew that Wei Luo had a servant girl called Jin Lu.

Her voice had probably changed because she was sick.

He didn't immediately leave. For a long time, he looked at the figure on the bed before unexpectedly walking to a round table, pouring a cup of water, bringing the cup of water to the bed, holding her up from the bed, and bringing the water to her lips, "Drink."

He thought that his illness was quite serious. Wasn't he only planning on returning her hairpin? Why was he staying to take care of her?

Why was it any of his business if she was thirsty or not?

Thinking of this, his eyebrows furrowed. Just as he was about to push her away and leave, the soft body clung to him without any warning. Her arms were around his waist. She wouldn't let him leave.

She wasn't wearing much, only a thin robe. The robe was so thin that Li Song could clearly feel the curves in the teenage girl's dainty and delicate body. It was the same feeling that he felt when he had pressed her against the wall during Spring Lantern Festival.

The young girl tightly hugged him. She even rubbed her cheek against his chest. Sounding pitiful, in a cutely spoiled manner, she said, "I'm so cold..."

Li Song's body stiffened. He felt like there was a fire rapidly rising from his stomach. His entire body felt hot.

## Chapter 95.1

---

Inside the room, the scent of the incense rose up in spirals and slowly traveled to them. The smell was so sweet that it was sticky.

Li Song felt that there was a wave of fire in his stomach that burned him until his entire body felt hot. He wanted to do something to alleviate this feeling. Today, he had also drunk wine, but his alcohol tolerance was usually good. Drinking a few of those shallow cups of wine shouldn't have been enough to make him drunk. However, as soon as he entered the room and saw Wei Luo's body, he couldn't help feeling strange.

When her soft body wrapped around him and her warm breath was exhaled into his ear as she acted spoiled, he couldn't help hugging her closer and fit his body snugly against hers.

Wei Luo... Wei Luo... He had said this name so many times. He loved her and hated her. She had done so many things beyond measure against him, but he still couldn't truly hate her. Even when he hated her, he hated himself more. There were so many women. Why was she the only one that moved his heart?

He couldn't give consideration to her sudden change in attitude. It was probably because he wanted her to smile at him too much. He couldn't resist tightening his hold on her when she acted cutely spoiled and pitifully said, "I'm so cold." Today, she was the one that provoked him. He wouldn't stop even if she showed her regret a moment later!

Li Song flipped them over, pressed her body beneath his, and viciously bit her lips like a wolf. He couldn't wait to swallow her and become one with her. The seductive and lovable body in his arms kept trembling, but he didn't want to be gentle with her. The more vicious he treated her, the better. This way she wouldn't forget him... At this time, he couldn't think about anything else. He only wanted to bully her. He wanted to viciously bully her until

she cried and begged for mercy.

The curtains by the bed fell down and blocked the scene inside.

Only the sound of a young man's impatient panting and a girl's delicate moaning could be heard. There was a rustling sound before clothes were thrown out from the bed and messily landed on the floor. The girl was too small and it was rather strenuous to manage. Her coquettish voice was as delicate as a bird. Before her voice could pass through the window, it had already dissipated in the air.

An entire night passed with the two people having different spring dreams.

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Early next morning, there was a touch of white at the horizon, the dark indigo started to fade from the mountain, and a faint glimmer of dawn was exposed. A sparrow was resting on the verandah and twittered once before fluttering its wings and flying away. At this moment, the young women hadn't woken up yet and there was only a few servant girls hurriedly walking in the verandah to prepare hot water and towels for each of their family's miss.

Yin Lou was standing outside of Wei Zheng's room. She placed her ear against the door to hear if there was any movement inside. She only dared to knock on the door after not hearing anything.

Carrying a copper basin, she walked into the inner room, passed the divider screen with a landscape painting, and arrived by the bed.

There was a pile of clothes by the bed. She covered her lips, ambiguously smiled, walked closer, and lifted up the curtain. Just as she was about to wake up the two people on the bed, she saw the man on the bed and her eyes immediately widened. Scared, she retreated two steps, dropped the copper basin, and the hot water

suddenly splashed out!

The man was awaked by this sound. He furrowed his eyebrows and opened his eyes.

Li Song felt like his head was going to split open. It felt as if someone had smashed something against his head. He didn't why he had such a horrible headache. He usually wouldn't be this hangover after drinking. He half sat up and thought of the images from last night. That pair of dark, peach blossom eyes had shone with a rarely seen gentle light. He had bullied Wei Luo too harshly. She was so small. Her body was completely unable to bear him, but he didn't stop. He had heartlessly entered her deepest part... Was she still feeling pain right now?

Since she was already his, then regardless of how much hatred there was between them, he would be willing to let go of their former hatred. He would take responsibility for her and wouldn't let her suffer any grievances. When he went back, he would talk with his parents and personally pay Duke Ying's residence a visit to propose marriage... He lowered his head and looked at the young girl in his arms. The smile on his face immediately froze.

His face slowly changed. His eyes became malicious and terrifying. In a single moment, there was a layer of ice!

The person in his arms wasn't Wei Luo. It was her younger sister, Wei Zheng!

It wasn't her. Then the person that he had loved last night...

He clenched his fist. Blue veins protruded on the back of his hand. He raised his head and looked at the servant girl near the bed and squeezed out these words from his teeth, "What happened?"

Yin Lou stood in place and trembled from the terrifying expression in eyes. She couldn't even say a single word.

How would she know what had happened? She also wanted to

ask someone. Shouldn't Young Master Song Hui been the one that came into the room? Why was it this person instead?

Yin Lou felt overwhelmed. She didn't even pick up the copper basin from the floor. Who didn't know that Li Song was the capital's notorious young despot? He was disagreeable, rebellious, rude, and unreasonable. If you offended him, then there was no hope for a good ending. Now, her miss was lying in a bed with him and his face looked so ugly. What should she do next...

On the bed, Wei Zheng was awakened from the two people's movements. Her cheeks rubbed against the pillow and she quietly groaned. Her cheeks were pink and her body was covered in traces of being loved. There were some areas that still ached, especially the spot between her legs... But, she endured the hardship gladly. As long as it was for older brother Song Hui, then she didn't have any complaints. Last night, older brother Song Hui had been very fierce. She hadn't expected it. He looked like such a gentle person, but he was so intense when doing that. He had almost broken her.

Her plan had already been worked out in her mind and she prepared to show a shocked and startled expression when she opened her eyes. But, unexpectedly, she didn't need to pretend.

The person in front of her wasn't Song Hui. It was Prince Ru Yang's heir, Li Song.

She was suddenly unable to move. Faced with Li Song's gloomy and dreadful face, she felt as if all of her blood was flowing backwards. Utterly shocked, she stuttered, "You... why is it you..."

Li Song also wanted to ask this question.

Why was it her? Why wasn't Wei Luo the person that he had had shared a night with?

He remembered that the servant girl had said this was Wei Luo's room last night. He also remembered that there was a faint fragrance in the dark room. He lifted his hand and grabbed her



neck. His five fingers tightened their hold and he hatefully asked, "Was this your scheme?"

She had intentionally pretended to be Wei Luo to make him misunderstand and lit aphrodisiac incense in the room! Li Song wanted to hack her to death. Death ends all troubles.

Wei Zheng wanted to break free from his hand, but there was a big contrast between a man's strength and woman's. She couldn't shake him off. She couldn't breath and her eyes almost rolled back, "Let me go..."

At this moment, her heart had turned to ashes. There were only three words in her mind. She was ruined.

## Chapter 95.2

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Wei Luo had slept well last night. The mountain air was refreshingly cool. Last night, there had been a cool breeze from the window. As expected, it had been much more comfortable than sleeping at home.

She had woken up early in the morning, picked out and changed into a light pink muslin jacket and skirt embroidered with lotus flowers, sat in front of her bronze mirror brushing her hair, and walked to the copper basin to wash her face and rinse her mouth. Just as was wiping her face and before she had time to eat breakfast, a servant girl came inside and stammered, "Fourth Miss, please... Please come with me..."

It was Wei Zheng's servant girl, Yin Lou.

Wei Luo looked into the mirror to wipe away the rest of the water on her face and calmly asked, "Is something wrong?"

Yin Lou embarrassedly nodded her head. Probably because she didn't want other people to hear, she looked around before quietly saying, "Fourth Miss, please follow this servant."

It was difficult to imagine that Wei Zheng would look for her without a reason. Wei Luo put down her towel and leisurely walked over, "What's the matter? Tell me about it."

Yin Lou didn't know what to say. She was so anxious that she was about to cry. She kneeled down in front of Wei Luo.

This was related to Wei Zheng's reputation. If something happened to Wei Zheng, then she wouldn't have a good ending either as her servant girl.

Wei Luo's eyebrows went up in surprise. She was really curious what would make her lose her head like this, so she agreed to go with her. Yin Lou lead her to the front of Wei Zheng's room, pushed opened the closed door, and entered the room. There was

absolute silence in the room. When Wei Luo walked inside, there wasn't any abnormal in the outer room. Just as she entered the inner room and saw the two people inside, she immediately stopped walking.

Wei Zheng was wearing a yellow outer robe decorated with plum flowers at the edges and sitting on the bed with her head lowered. Both of hands were holding the bed sheets so tightly that her hands had turned white.

Li Song was standing at the other end of the bed and wearing the same deep black robe that he was wearing yesterday. His face was gloomy and his entire body was shrouded in a terrifying aura.

Wei Luo's sharp eyes saw the purplish red bruises on Wei Zheng's neck and smelled the soft ambiguous scent in the air. She immediately understood what had happened. She furrowed her eyebrows, didn't ask anything, turned around, and started walking outside.

Yin Lou hastily stopped her, "Fourth Miss, you have to be responsible for our Miss... Please don't go."

Wei Luo turned around to look at her. There wasn't a change in her tone, but her words very ruthless, "She was responsible for this shameful act and defiled herself. How can I help her? How is this related to me?"

Yin Lou was unable to respond. She was choked off in her speech.

Hearing these words, Wei Zheng fiercely glared at her with red eyes and deliberately gritted her teeth and said, "How is this not related to you? He only did that to me because he thought I was you..."

As expected, Wei Luo stopped walking and turned around to look at her and Li Song. Her eyes held undisguised disgust that made Li Song's heart plunge to the bottom. Clearly, he was in pain, but he didn't want to show it in front of her. He lifted the corner of his

mouth and sneered, "Did I mistake you for the wrong person, or was this because of your scheming? As a dignified daughter from Duke Ying's family, are you not afraid that I'll spread the news that you used this type of underhanded trick to coerce someone?"

Wei Zheng's face turned white and stared back at him, "What nonsense are you saying? Clearly, you..."

In large strides, Li Song walked towards her and raised his hand. Wei Zheng thought he was going to choke her again and instinctively dodged to the side. But, he only bent over and took out a white porcelain bottle from underneath the pillow. He turned the bottle in his hand and hatefully and disdainfully looked at her, "What's this? Are you going to say you don't know?"

Wei Zheng clenched her teeth and didn't reply.

Li Song went back two steps and held the small, porcelain bottle so tightly that he almost crushed it, but he didn't. He threw the bottle at Wei Luo's feet and didn't say anything.

Wei Luo bent down to pick up the porcelain bottle to look at it in her hand, saw the label on the bottle, and probably knew what had happened. She hadn't thought that Wei Zheng would do something like this. She couldn't be interested in Li Song. Then, whom had she prepared to lure into a trap? Song Hui? From the current scene, Li Song had probably come here for some inexplicable reason after Song Hui left and inadvertently fallen in this trap.

Wei Zheng really opened her eyes. Before, she had only thought she was stupid. She hadn't expected that she would be so lacking in moral character.

Wei Luo slowly said, "I'll tell this matter to daddy and paternal grandfather. As for how they'll deal with this... You'll have to see what they decide."

Then, she turned around and left the inner room. She probably

didn't want to continue seeing this scene.

As she walked, she ordered Jin Lu, "Go prepared a carriage immediately. I'm leaving the mountain and returning home."

Jin Lu hurriedly responded yes.

Wei Zheng blankly sat on the bed and thought of Wei Kun and her paternal grandfather's response when they found out. Her hands and feet felt icy and her face was pale.

Li Song stood in place for a long time. When her figure had walked far away, he started following after her in large steps. Wei Luo wasn't walking quickly. He quickly caught up to her in the verandah and stopped in front of her, "Wait!"

Wei Luo took half a step back, lifted her eyes up to look at him, and indifferently asked, "Is there something else?"

Li Song lowered his head and looked at her for long time. That pair of eyes were dark and deep. All of his pride and unruliness were hidden away. Close to abandoning himself to despair, he asked, "Are you not going to ask why I was in her room?"

Wei Luo looked at him without saying a word.

He hoarsely said, "I heard that you were sick and thought it was your room, so I went inside to look..."

He looked into her eyes and cruelly said, "Wei Luo, the person I want is you."

Wei Luo's expression immediately changed. She pursed her pink lips and raised her hand to viciously slap him!

## Chapter 96.1

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When Zhao Liuli and Liang Yu Rong received the news that Wei Luo would be immediately leaving, they hurriedly came over to ask why. She had only been here a day and had previously said she would stay here for a month to keep Zhao Liuli company. Why was she suddenly leaving?

Zhao Liuli naturally didn't want her to leave. Broken-hearted at the idea that she was leaving, she asked, "Do you have to go? Was it because you weren't used to living here? I'll have the servants change your room. You can stay with me at Yu Quan Courtyard."

The problem wasn't that she felt uncomfortable staying here. Wei Luo simply shook her head and said, "Something happened with my family and I have to go back. When my family matter is resolved, I'll come back here."

Wei Luo didn't elaborate further. It wasn't because she wanted to give consideration to Wei Zheng's reputation. She was doing this for herself. If other women found out about what Wei Zheng had done, it wouldn't be good for any of the unmarried women in Duke Ying's residence. It might even damage her reputation. She knew that Zhao Liuli and Liang Yu Rong wouldn't gossip, but before the matter was resolved, it would be better if she didn't tell them for now.

Zhao Liuli felt very lost. Originally, she had wanted Wei Luo to stay for a few more days, so that this summer wouldn't be boring. She hadn't expected that she would be leaving so early. In the end, she didn't succeed in persuading her, so she prepared a carriage and arranged a few guards for her so that she would be safe when descended the mountain.

When Wei Luo returned to Duke Ying's residence, it was dusk. She asked the servants about Wei Kun's location and found out that he was in the main courtyard talking with Duke Ying and Old

Madam. So, she directly went to her maternal grandparent's main room instead of going back to Pine Courtyard.

When she arrived, she heard them discussing her marriage.

Yesterday, Song Bai Ye had come to Duke Ying's residence to cancel the engagement. He said that previous decision to engage their children before Wei Luo was born was too impulsive. Now that Jiang Miao Lan wasn't here, they should consider their children's opinions. Anyways, it was a bunch of words that didn't have any logic behind them. Duke Ying was so angry that he didn't even ask him to stay to drink tea before hurrying him out.

Wei Kun also felt this was rather unexpected. Their discussion had been fine a few days ago. They had settled the marriage and were about send the betrothal gifts. Wei Luo would be married after her hairpin ceremony. Why did they suddenly change their minds?

Right now, Duke Ying was still angry. He asserted that he would no longer have any dealings with Count Zhong Yi's family. The mama next to Old Madam tried to persuade, "Old Master Duke, calm down. It's better that Count Zhong Yi's family broke faith and canceled the marriage now. Otherwise, Fourth Miss might suffer after she's married... Fourth Miss is beautiful and clever. If she doesn't have an engagement, the people coming to the residence to propose will be as numerous as fishes in a river. Why is there any reason for you worry about finding her a good marriage?"

Listening to her words, Wei Kun nodded in agreement. Just as he was about to speak, a servant girl came inside to say, "Old Master Duke and Old Madam, Fourth Miss is here."

Then, they saw Wei Luo walk out from behind the servant girl. She passed through the doorway and saluted to the people inside, "Daddy, paternal grandfather, paternal grandmother."

Wei Kun was wearing a navy blue silk robe and sitting in an

ironwood chair. Seeing that she had come back without any notice, he was rather startled, "Ah Luo? Why have you come back? Didn't you go Zi Yu Villa to accompany Princess Tianji?"

Duke Ying and Old Madam also had surprise expression on their faces.

Wei Luo lifted her skirt, kneeled in the center of the room, looked down, and said, "Ah Luo has something to say to daddy, paternal grandfather, and paternal grandmother."

She was rarely this solemn. Wei Kun vaguely felt that something meaningful must have happened.

As expected, Wei Luo had Jin Lu bring a small porcelain bottle over to him as she said, "This was found underneath fifth younger sister's pillow. Daddy, please look."

Wei Kun took the bottle, turned it over, and suddenly stiffened when he saw the word on the bottom of the bottle. Although he didn't go to the red-light district, he had heard of some officials using this type of thing to increase interest as their hobby after being immersed in the depravedness of officialdom for so many years. He knew that this was something that came from the red-light district. Utterly shocked, he looked at Wei Luo. "You said that you found this underneath Wei Zheng's pillow?"

Wei Luo nodded and immediately said, "It's Ah Luo's fault for being useless. I didn't teach younger sister well, so she learned this type of filthy method..."

Then, she narrated what had happened this morning. She didn't add any details to make the story more interesting. She only said what she had seen, but this was already enough for the people to clearly understand what had happened. By the time she finished speaking, one after another, Duke Ying and Old Madam had gasped in surprise.

Although she had put the blame on herself, no one here would



blame her. Instead, they would compare her to Wei Zheng. This would only clearly and obviously show her sensibility.

Wei Kun's face was ashen. He didn't seem able to say a single word.

Duke Ying's face turned white for a period of time. He was a stubborn old man that followed the rules inflexibly and couldn't stand a disregard for authority and social decency. He loudly slapped the Eight Immortal style table and raged, "Where's Wei Zheng? Bring Wei Zheng here to see me!"

Wei Luo said, "Fifth Younger Sister is still at Zi Yu Villa."

Duke Ying didn't care where she was. He immediately ordered people to go Zi Yu Villa and bring her back. There couldn't be even a moment of delay!

He had already been in a bad mood over Song Bai Ye breaking the engagement and now Wei Zheng had caused this type of scandal. It really was pouring oil into a fire. He was so angry that there was almost steam coming out from his head.

On the same day, very late at night, Wei Zheng returned from Zi Yu Villa

Just as she came down from the carriage, Duke Ying called her to the ancestral hall that was in the back of the residence.

Duke Ying had her kneeling in the ancestral hall to receive her punishment. Faced with the long table that was lined with the ancestral tablets, she was disciplined according to family law. Wei Zheng knew that Duke Ying was truly angry and couldn't avoid being beaten today. She didn't beg for mercy and only lowered her head without saying a word. She knew it would hurt, but when then cane struck her body, she still couldn't help crying out in pain.

When Duke Ying saw the light green and purple bruises on her neck, he angrily struck her again instead of becoming more

lenient. "Where did you learn this from? Did Du-shi teach you this? How could such a shameless girl come from my residence? I... I have to beat you to death!"

Wei Zheng had been scared of the Duke Ying since she was a child. He was too solemn and stern. She didn't dare to resist even though her body was covered in injuries. Crying, she collapsed on the ground and begged Wei Kun, who was on the side, "Daddy, I know I was wrong... Please save me..."

Wei Kun was also angry that she had done something so immoral. He waved his sleeve and walked out of the ancestral hall.

In total, Duke Ying had hit her twenty times. Just as he was about to continue, her painful body twitched, her eyes rolled back, and she fainted.

## Chapter 96.2

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By early next morning, everyone in Duke Ying's residence knew about this matter.

Wei Zheng no longer had her virginity. She couldn't marry anyone else, other than Li Song.

However, the problem was... Would Prince Ru Yang's family accept her?

Although she had to be disciplined, Wei Zheng was still his daughter. Even if Wei Kun was angry, he still had to be responsible for her. He found time in the midst of pressing affairs to go to Prince Ru Yang's residence to discuss Wei Zheng and Li Song's marriage.

But, Prince Ru Yang's family didn't intend to recognize her as a future daughter-in-law!

When Elder Princess Gao Yang heard the entire story, she was extremely angry about this matter. She felt that it was Wei Zheng who had defiled her son. Originally, she had intended to properly scold Wei Zheng. However, because she was speaking to Wei Kun, she lightened her tone even though she was angry. "It's not that I'm unreasonable, but her behavior was too despicable. Is this something that a daughter from a noble family should do? No matter what, I won't agree to Song-er marrying her."

Wei Kun had a stomach full of words. After mulling over his thoughts, he finally said, "It's not completely my daughter's fault. If your esteemed son didn't enter a girl's bedroom in the middle of the night, how would this have happened? Logically, your esteemed son is also at fault. "

Sitting at a seat below, with her head lowered, Li Xiang fiddled with her newly painted nail polish and quietly muttered, "How could my older brother like her? She must have seduced my older

brother..."

Wei Kun's face stiffened.

Not only did Elder Princess Gao Yang not scold her, she approved of her words. Prince Ru Yang's family and Duke Ying's didn't have good relationship to begin with. The plan for Wei Chang Hong and Li Xiang's marriage had come to nothing. Later, the two sides became even more deadlock as they had more disputes. Whenever both sides met, neither side would have a pleasant face. And, now something like this had happened.

If it weren't because they were friends when they were younger, Elder Princess Gao Yang would have already driven Wei Kun out of the residence. After thinking for a moment, Elder Princess Gao Yang said, "It's not impossible for Wei Zheng to enter our family, but she can't be his wife. The position of House Li's wife isn't reserved for this type of girl. If she's willing, she can enter our family as a concubine."

This was a bit too much.

At any rate, Wei Zheng was Duke Ying's granddaughter. Her mother was the official wife. For her to be Prince Ru Yang's heir's concubine, it wouldn't be acceptable whether it was sentimentally or logically!

Wei Kun clenched his hand around the armrest. He had to mention old debts. "When Chang Hong was injured by your esteem son, House Wei didn't pursue this matter. If my daughter is married into Prince Ru Yang's family, I'll let bygones be bygones..."

In this matter, Elder Princess Gao Yang was very much in the wrong.

Back then, the two families had agreed about this marriage and both sides were satisfied. She hadn't expected that her son would injure someone else's son and caused them to part on bad terms! Later, House Wei had suffered silently without demanding an

explanation from them. The matter was left unsettled. If this matter was brought up, their family really did owe House Wei a favor.

Elder Princess Gao Yang's face slightly softened, but she was still very reluctant. As a daughter of House Wei, Wei Zheng's status was more than enough to be her son's wife. But, her heart still felt disgusted that she would enter her family after using such a method. In light of Li Song's qualifications, he could marry any type of girl, whether it was dignified and moral, or proper and magnanimous. For him to hang himself onto a crooked tree like Wei Zheng, how could she not feel it was unfortunate?

Elder Princess Gao Yang didn't say anything and Wei Kun wouldn't concede. The current scene was very awkward.

Standing at the doorway, Li Song was wearing an ink-colored robe embroidered with golden thread. With his eyes looking down, he thought for a long time before finally entering the room.

He saluted Prince Ru Yang and Elder Princess Gao Yang and said, "Mother, I'll marry her."

Elder Princess Gao Yang was started. She incredulously exclaimed, "Song-er?" She thought that Li Song had said this so that she wouldn't be put into a difficult position and hurriedly said, "Don't worry. Mother will handle this for you..."

He curved his lips. He was clearly smiling, but there wasn't the slightest trace of a smile in his eyes. Instead, there was an obstinate struggle. "Anyways, I reached a marriageable age. I have to marry someone. It might as well be Wei Zheng."

He had his own selfish motives. Previously, he had thought a lot while standing outside. He wouldn't be able to marry Wei Luo in this lifetime. It wouldn't be bad to be her brother-in-law. At least, in this lifetime, they would always have a connection. She wouldn't be able to get rid of him.

Elder Princess wasn't the only one that was startled. On the side, Li Xiang was also extremely shocked. She stood up and said, "Older brother, did you become stupid? How could that type of woman be suitable to enter our family? Don't you find her dirty?"

Hearing these words, Wei Kun's face became very ugly.

Li Song didn't reply. He looked at Wei Kun and indifferently said, "But, I have a condition."

"Say it." Wei Kun said.

"After we're married, she can't meddle with anything I do. My mother will continue to manage Prince Ru Yang's residence's household affairs."

This meant that Wei Zheng would be marrying into an empty position. There wouldn't be any benefit to marrying him.

This was already pretty good. At least, she would still be married. It was better than losing her innocence and staying at home until she became an old spinster. Wei Kun hesitated for a moment. In the end, he still nodded and agreed.

Even if Elder Princess Gao Yang didn't want to agree, her son had already spoken. She didn't have another option and could only accept this. Wei Kun didn't leave Prince Ru Yang's residence until the two families spent an hour discussing the details of the marriage.

Three days later, people from Prince Ru Yang's residence sent over betrothal gifts. The gifts were for fifth branch's Fifth Miss.

The betrothal gifts were carried over by only thirty-six people. It was a pitiful amount. It showed how indifferent the groom's family was about this marriage. Wei Kun was displeased about this in his heart, but he didn't say anything. It was Wei Zheng's fault for being a disappointment. She had pre-marital sex. Why wouldn't they think lowly of her?

After the wedding date was settled, every few days, the women

from noble families talked about how House Wei's Fifth Miss was going to marry before her hairpin adulthood ceremony. The marriage had been decided so quickly and the groom's family didn't even give decent betrothal gifts. People who used their heads tried to guess what had happened. There was a lot of gossip and none of it was good for Wei Zheng's reputation.

Wei Zheng and Li Song's wedding was scheduled at the end of the next month. The timing was too short. Everyone in Duke Ying's residence was busy with preparing for Wei Zheng's wedding.

On the surface, no one said anything. But, they couldn't resist secretly gossiping about her with disapproving words. For her own family to be like this, it wasn't necessary to say how outsiders viewed her.

## Chapter 96.3

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Today, Wei Luo was visiting fourth branch's Plum Courtyard. Fourth Madam Qin-shi was helping Wei Zheng by embroidering her wedding veil.

Wei Zheng's mother was in Gingko Courtyard and couldn't help her, so Qin-shi was helping Wei Zheng with these things. Seeing Wei Luo enter the room, Qin-shi gestured for her to come to her side. "Ah Luo, come look. How does the embroidery for this pair of mandarin duck look?"

Qin-shi's embroidery skills were very good. She was the best in her family before she married. Her skills hadn't diminished over the years. The pair of mandarin ducks in her hands was very vivid and realistic as if there really was a pair of birds right in front of them.

Wei Luo moved closer to look and praised, "It's really good. If I didn't look carefully, I might mistakenly believe they're real. Fourth Aunt, will you teach me how to make this later?"

Wei Luo's embroidery skills weren't very good because she hadn't seriously spent time learning it. Every time she tried, she would prick her fingers. Later, she became disinclined to continue practicing because of her dislike of pain.

Qin-shi smiled after hearing her words. The gloomy mood she had during the past few days also improved.

Qin-shi's eyes felt strained from embroidering, so she stood up and put the needlework to the side on a flat basket-tray. She sincerely said to Wei Luo, "If you want to learn, I'll teach you whenever you come over here. As a girl, it's better if you know how to embroider. When you marry into your husband's family, they'll have a better opinion of you." Then she paused and thought of the matter in the residence. She couldn't help sighing, "Definitely don't be like Wei Zheng... Even if she's getting married, her



husband's family will look down upon her."

Wei Luo pursed her lips and didn't say anything. Wei Zheng's ending was her own fault. It couldn't be blamed on someone else.

Qin-shi sat down next to her and took her hand to say, "Ah Luo, you're a clever and understanding child. Fourth Aunt has never had to worry about you... But, this type of thing has happened to Wei Zheng and your engagement with House Song has been canceled. I've been feeling uneasy during the past few days."

Wei Luo faintly smiled and asked a rhetorical question, "What is Fourth Aunt worrying about? What could happen to me?"

Qin-shi paused and finally said, "You're so good. House Song is blind. You'll definitely marry someone even better... Fourth Aunt only hopes that you'll know your place and not be as foolish as Wei Zheng. She gave herself before marriage and her husband's family won't treat her well after she's married."

Wei Luo froze for a moment. She thought of something and her expression immediately became uneasy.

Although she and Zhao Jie hadn't taken anything too far, he always couldn't resist holding and hugging her every time they met. She didn't know if Fourth Aunt was referring to this... It was totally Zhao Jie's fault. It was one thing for him to kiss her. Last time, when they were at the countryside, he said he would help her by rubbing... She blushed, coughed, and pretended to be calm when she said, "Fourth Aunt, don't worry. I definitely won't follow in her footsteps."

Hearing her promise, Qin-shi patted her hand and let go of her concerns.

Wei Luo had dinner with Qin-shi, then Wei Chang Mi, that little calf bothered her for an hour. When she left Plum Courtyard, the sky was already completely dark. She went back to her room to take a bath, then she changed into a magnolia-colored thin robe.

After her hair dried, she lied down in bed and quickly fell asleep.

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The moon was suspended in the sky. The night was silent.

Most of the people in Pine Courtyard were resting in their rooms, only the occasional servant girl responsible for night vigil would be walking in the verandah.

There was the sound of lonely insects chirping in the courtyard. Occasionally, the wind would pass through and leave behind the sound of rustling leaves.

A tall body came to Wei Luo's bedside, leaned over, picked her up, and walked to the window.

Wei Luo was sleeping soundly. She only felt that her body was becoming lighter and lighter as if she was floating on clouds and drifting towards the sky. Not much later, she fell onto a hard wall. Although this wall was hard, it was warm. The wall grew a pair of hands that wrapped her up tightly. Wei Luo slowly opened her eyes and saw the vast, starry sky. The boundless sky of stars spilled over her eyes as if she could touch them if she only stretched her hand out. She blinked in puzzlement. She hadn't quite returned to her senses yet. She heard a quiet voice by her ear say, "Little one, are you finally awake?"

She turned her head in surprise, looked directly into Zhao Jie's phoenix eyes that were as dark as ink, and slightly opened her mouth to ask, "Older brother Prince Jing?"

She was only wearing a thin sleeping robe. Zhao Jie was afraid that she would be cold, so he took off his outer robe and wrapped it around her. He smiled and said, "It's me."

But, why was he here? Also, where were they?

Zhao Jie saw the puzzlement in her eyes. He lowered his face, rubbed his chin against her forehead, and intimately said, "We're on the roof of your room."

Wei Luo opened her eyes wider and instinctively looked down. They really were sitting on glazed roof tiles. The wide courtyard was beneath them. At this time, the courtyard was empty and totally silent. As far as her eyes could see, the entire capital seemed to be asleep. It felt as if they were the only two people in the world.

Wei Luo was slightly scared of heights. She burrowed closer to Zhao Jie's chest. "Big brother, why did you bring me here?"

Zhao Jie's hands made their way inside the outer robe that was wrapped around her. He placed his hands on her soft waist and wrapped her in his arms. "I miss you, so I came here to see you."

Although summer was hot, it was still slightly cold at night. In addition, they were sitting on the roof. The cool wind faintly blew past them and brought chilliness. Zhao Jie's outer robe held his body's warmth. Bundled up, Wei Luo felt warmth and peace of mind.

Wei Luo originally felt emotionally touched. But after his hand paused on her waist, it went inside her sleeping robe and gently rubbed twice. "Does it still feel sore here?"

Wei Luo's cheeks were so red that blood could drip out. She wanted to fling his hand out, but his hand was stronger than her. How could she drag it out? After she tried pulling back and forth, he twisted his fingers and brought her closer. Her soft, lovable voice cried out. Snuggled close to him, she protested and sobbed, "It hurts."

Zhao Jie didn't let go of her. He lowered his head to kiss her and swallowed her whimpers into his stomach. To prevent her from falling down, one hand was around her waist and the other hand was left there to rub and torment her. His movement was slightly gentler than before. How could Wei Luo withstand this type of teasing? Her body immediately softened. Fortunately, she still had awareness and bit his tongue, "Don't... Other people will see..."

Zhao Jie quietly chuckled. His voice was compelling when he

said, "At this time, other than you and me, who else would be awake?"

That wasn't absolutely true. What if someone raised their head and looked at the roof? Wouldn't that person see everything? She had recently promised Fourth Aunt that she would be responsible. Only half a day had passed, how could she go back on her words?!

Wei Luo moved back to avoid him and stared at him with watery eyes, "Older brother Prince Jing, if there something you want to say, say it. I'll be mad of you keep touching me like this."

Zhao Jie knew when to stop before going too far. Just now, he had missed her too much and couldn't resist. At the current moment, he finally exercised restraint. He held her small waist and hoarsely said, "Ah Luo, this prince heard about what happened that night."

Wei Luo could vaguely guess what night he was referring to. She paused and didn't reply.

Not much later, he continued, "For every day this prince isn't married to you, it's another day I feel anxious. How about I come to Duke Ying's residence to propose marriage tomorrow?"

Li Song's evil intentions wouldn't die. He even dared to enter Wei Luo's bedroom at night. Li Song's hand had just healed and he had the audacity to go after his woman. Fortunately, the person in the room was Wei Zheng. Otherwise, it wouldn't be enough even if he sliced his flesh off his bones a thousand times.

If that had really happened, Prince Ru Yang's family wouldn't be allowed to continue existing either.

Hearing his words, Wei Luo repeatedly shook her head. She held his arm and said, "You can't. You can't propose marriage right now."

Zhao Jie's expression sank, "Why?"

She argued with the courage of her convictions, "My daddy is

already busy and troubled over Wei Zheng's matter. His mood isn't good. If you propose marriage at this time, he definitely won't agree." Then, she paused, tilted her head to look at his chin, and said, "Wait for a while."

Zhao Jie rested his head on her neck, inhaled to breathe in her light scent, and in a slightly displeased tone, he said, "This prince doesn't want to wait. This prince wants you now."

Wei Luo's little face blushed and she charmingly scolded, "You can't."

They were sitting on the roof. She kept worrying that she would fall down, so she tightly held onto his waist. As she burrowed closer, she said, "Big brother, wait until after Wei Zheng is married... Then come to my home to propose marriage."

The young girl was seriously earnest as she said these words. She didn't notice that her tone seemed like coaxing a child. Zhao Jie held her small body, hoarsely laughed, lifted his head, and said, "Then give this prince a kiss?"

Wei Luo hesitated for a while and looked at his thin lips with her slippery, dark eyes. In the end, she slowly went forward. She rarely took the initiative and was very unfamiliar. She stretched out her small, pink, and tender tongue to lick his lips. She blinked and looked at him. "Is this okay?"

Zhao Jie's dark eyes turned and he huskily said, "Not good. Ah Luo, it has to be like the way I kiss you."

Wei Luo's face wasn't as thick as his. After kissing him twice, she retreated. She pursed her lips and said, "I don't want to kiss anymore. It doesn't taste good."

Zhao Jie couldn't help laughing. He held her little face to kiss her. He didn't willingly let her go until he had repeatedly tasted her.

## Chapter 96.4

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Wei Zheng and Li Song's wedding was scheduled for the end of the July.

The day before the wedding, Wei Zheng visited Ginkgo Courtyard and told everything to Du-shi. Du-shi was naturally happy when she heard that her daughter would be marrying Prince Ru Yang's heir. She kept praising Wei Zheng for being a person blessed with good fortune.

Du-shi had lived here for eight years. She was no longer that leisurely and noble Fifth Madam. Time had worn away all of her calmness and bearing. She had become an ordinary woman. She was one year younger than Qin-shi, but she already had a lot of grey hair and the wrinkles on her face were obvious. Her clothes were old-fashioned and had lost their dyed color. Her down-and-out state made it difficult for people to recognize her as Duke Ying's family's Fifth Madam.

Li Song was Prince Ru Yang's only son. When Wei Zheng married him, she would be the only daughter-in-law. In the future, the residence's general affairs would be under her control.

Du-shi was naturally happy. She hugged her and kept saying, "And there's my Mi-er. Our whole family will be together again..."

Although Wei Zheng didn't like Wei Chang Mi, Du-shi would mention him every time she visited her. So she nodded and promised.

It was okay if Li Song didn't like her. After all, she didn't like him either. She only agreed to marry him to preserve her reputation. In the future, she would have a place to stay. As for other things, they weren't important.

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The next day was the wedding day.

When all was said and done, Duke Ying's granddaughter was getting married. Inside and outside, the entire residence was celebratory. There were bright red lanterns suspended in the verandah. Fireworks were set off at the entrance in the early morning. It was very lively.

When the auspicious time came, Prince Ru Yang's people came to escort the bride.

Li Song was wearing a bright red wedding robe and sitting on a fine, tall horse. His handsome face didn't have the slightest trace of happiness. Instead, it was so cold that it was frightening.

When the people in the residence carried Wei Zheng outside, he didn't even look at her. His thin lips were pressed into a line. Without saying a word, he struck the horse to signal for it to leave. The procession of people escorting the bride reached Prince Ru Yang's residence. As the groom and bride did their ritual kneeling to heaven and earth, the outsiders were very celebratory, but Prince Ru Yang and Elder Princess Gao Yang couldn't even manage to smile. On the side, Li Xiang disdainfully made a sound of disapproval and looked at Wei Zheng with contempt.

After the ceremony was over, it was time for the wedding night.

Li Song didn't enter their room. He didn't even share a nuptial cup with her or take off her veil. Instead, he turned around and went to drink with the guests. The bride chamber that should have been lively and cheerful was left empty. She didn't know where Li Xiang went. It seemed as if the bride was below everyone's notice. No one cared about her or welcome her.

As Wei Zheng's dowry servant girl, Yin Lou had a stomach full of grievances, "Miss, isn't this bullying..."

Wei Zheng lowered her head. Underneath her veil, her little face was full of humiliation. There were tears in her eyes and the silk handkerchief in her hands was almost crumbled into pieces.

She had originally thought this was Ru Yang's family's initial show of strength, but she was too naive. This was only the beginning. The worse was yet to come.

Wei Zheng sat on the bed and waited until 7pm. It was pitch-black outside the window. Li Song still hadn't returned. She had sat for so long that her entire body felt numb. She finally couldn't resist taking off her veil and saying to Yin Lou, "I want to change my clothes. I'm not going to wait anymore."

However, just as she said these words, there was movement outside the door.

Li Song had returned.

She pressed her lips tightly together and looked at the door.

She was still slightly scared of Li Song. The feeling of him almost choking her to death was fresh in her memory. He was too brutal when he was angry. Wei Zheng didn't dare to make him angry. However, because of her temperament, she wouldn't easily lower her head in front of other people. So, when the two sides met, neither of them said anything.

Li Song had drunk a lot of wine, but he was very clear-headed and his expression wasn't good. He didn't walk forward. He settled on carefully looking at Wei Zheng.

How did he mistake her for Wei Luo? How were they similar?

One was heaven. The other was hell. It was the difference between clouds and mud.

A long time later, Wei Zheng saw that they couldn't continue this stalemate. Just as she was about to say some words to ease the tension, she saw several men walking out from behind Li Song. They were Li Song's friends and had drunk a lot of wine. Elder Princess Gao Yang described them as a pack of scoundrels. These people were families with slightly lower status. While their fathers were officials in the imperial court, these sons were ignorant and



incompetent. They spent their time watching cockfights and dog races. They had done many evil things. At the moment, they were drunk and utterly shameless. Their eyes held wicked intentions as they looked at Wei Zheng.

Wei Zheng retreated backwards, looked at Li Song in horror, and incredulously said, "Li Song, you can't..."

Li Song seemed to ignore her words. He ordered a servant to bring a bowl of medicine that would prevent pregnancy. Then, without any mercy, he immediately left the room without looking at her.

## Chapter 97.1

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The first day of August was Wei Zheng's first time returning to her parents' home after her wedding.

Although Wei Kun was displeased about this son-in-law, proper etiquette must be followed. He woke up early to wash his face and rinse his mouth, changed into a black robe with a pattern of lotus stems at the border, arrived at the receiving room, saluted Duke Ying and Old Madam, and sat down in an ironwood chair below them.

At this time, there were already many people in the receiving room. The people from the other branches were also here. They were all smiling as they waited for the newlyweds to come.

Around 8am, servants came into the room to say that Prince Ru Yang's family's carriage was here.

A short while later, Li Song and Wei Zheng came into the room together. Li Song was wearing an indigo blue robe with a treasure pattern and black boots. He saluted Duke Ying and Old Madam. He looked very upright and honest. He showed restraint by curbing his hostility. When he faced Wei Kun, he even docilely called him, "Father."

His actions shocked Wei Kun terribly.

Li Song nodded and sat down on one of the nearby chairs.

Next to him, Wei Zheng was wearing a light green muslin top and a light red gauzy skirt. Her hair was up in an immortal-seeking hairstyle with golden mandarin ducks hairpins. Her lips were smiling and her cheeks were pink. She clearly looked very different compared to when she wasn't married yet.

She was a woman who no longer had her virginity. Her bottom lip was slightly hanging down. There was charming loveliness in her youth and inexperience. Without any effort, her actions were

flirtatious. She saluted her elders. One by one, she offered her grandparents tea. "Paternal grandfather, paternal grandmother, please drink tea."

Duke Ying had residual anger towards her. Even after drinking the tea, his face still didn't look good. However, Old Madam Luo-shi's attitude became slightly warmer. She didn't want to make things too uncomfortable, so she patted Wei Zheng's hand and said, "You can sit down. Don't tire yourself out."

Wei Zheng's face stagnated. She quickly nodded and slowly walked toward the chair next to Li Song's. Her body was stiff after she sat down.

After Duke Ying and Old Madam said a few words, they had Li Song and Wei Zheng stay for lunch. Li Song didn't refused.

During the time before lunch, Li Song, Duke Ying, Wei Kun, and the other men stayed in the receiving room. The madams took Wei Zheng to the nearby reception pavilion to talk.

Du-shi wasn't here and the madams didn't feel comfortable with saying too much. They just briefly mentioned how a husband and wife and a daughter-in-law and mother-in-law should get along. They instructed Wei Zheng with the rules for living with her husband's family. Wei Zheng's head was lowered. She didn't reply and seemed preoccupied with her thoughts. First and Fourth Madam knew that her temperament was always like this, so they didn't say anything. Second Madam was already too busy with dealing with the daughter that had been born outside. She didn't have time to be concerned with anyone else. Only Third Madam was a chatterbox. She held Wei Zheng's hand and asked, "How is House Li treating you?"

Wei Zheng's hand was like icy cold. She resisted the urge to take her hand out of Liu-shi's hand. She pursed her lips into a smile and in a relaxed tone, she said, "Elder Princess and Prince Ru Yang treat me very well. Third Aunt, you don't have to worry."

Slightly surprised and reassured, Liu-shi made a sound of acknowledgement before worriedly asked, "Then... How about you and Li Song?"

Without changing her expression, Wei Zheng pulled her hand away. She was worried that Liu-shi would discover that she was trembling. She picked up the white glazed teacup with a rose pattern, took a sip of tea, and smiled as she said, "He's very meticulous towards my daddy. When he heard that daddy hasn't been feeling well lately, he brought along several pieces of ginseng and reishi mushroom when we left the residence this morning." She paused. She was worried that Liu-shi wouldn't believe her, so she blushed to show the appearance of bashfulness. "He treats me well too. Other than occasionally being a bit crude and rough..."

Liu-shi naturally understood the meaning behind her words. She ambiguously smiled and didn't ask any more questions.

Prince Ru Yang was a general. His son practiced martial arts since he was child. How gentle could a military person be? It was understandable if they were slightly crude and rough.

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Around noon, the entire family was sitting at one table in the reception room to eat lunch.

Wei Kun had also called Wei Luo and Chang Hong over here.

Wei Luo and Chang Hong were originally gathering lotus flowers at the lotus pond that was at the back of the residence. Lotus flowers had a strong pigment that could be used to make rouge and lipstick. Chang Hong was rowing the boat at the back while Wei Luo gathered the lotus flowers one by one. After they came out of the lotus pond, their foreheads and the tip of their noses were covered in delicate layer of sweat from the summer heat.

After hearing Jin Lu's words, Wei Luo couldn't help curiously asking, "Why does daddy want us to go over there? Wasn't it fine

just to have the elders there?"

Jin Lu held a silk handkerchief out to wipe Wei Luo's sweat. Before she touched Wei Luo, Wei Chang Hong took the handkerchief. Jin Lu embarrassedly said, "Master said it was just eating to lunch together..."

Wei Chang Hong held the silk handkerchief, wiped the sweat on Wei Luo's face, and said, "Let's go then."

Wei Luo didn't have to time take a bath. She could only put on a pomegranate red outer robe with a stylized mushroom stem pattern before following Chang Hong to the receiving room.

When they arrived at the receiving room, everyone was already sitting down. She saluted Duke Ying and Old Madam.

Fourth Madam Qing-shi gestured her to her side, "Ah Luo and Chang Hong are here. Sit down next Fourth Aunt. Today is your fifth younger sister's first visit home after her wedding. You two should at least see her once..." Then she looked left and right at Wei Luo and exclaimed in surprised, "Where did you two go? Why are you sweating so much?"

Wei Luo lifted her eyes to glance at Li Song and Wei Zheng who were across from them. There wasn't any strong emotion in her eyes when her gaze swept past them. She smilingly curved her eyes when she looked at Qin-shi and replied, "I went to pick lotus flowers with Chang Hong at the back of the residence. Chang Hong was rowing the boat and I was responsible for gathering the flowers. It didn't take long to pick enough flowers to fill half of the prow of the boat. But, the weather was too warm. I was sweating even when I was only slightly moving. I won't go next time. "

Without a better option, Qin-shi could only scold her, "What's the matter with you? It's so hot. Why would you go there? Of course, you're sweating."

Wei Luo's smile was obedient and cute as she said, "Lotus flowers

have a very pretty color and can be used to make rouge and lipstick. When Auntie Han makes them, I'll bring extra ones to my aunts. I guarantee that you'll all look ten years younger when using them."

Her words made the mood in the room more cheerful and lively as the various madams smiled.

Seeing that the mood was just right, Qin-shi said to her and Wei Chang Hong, "Chang Hong, you probably met House Li's heir. Ah Luo, have you met him before? This is Prince Ru Yang's heir, he's your brother-in-law."

Wei Luo didn't have a choice. She had to look at Li Song. The smile on her lips slowly faded. She politely greeted him, "Heir."

Li Song didn't smile. His eyes were looking down and she couldn't see his expression or guess his emotion. Even after a long time, he didn't reply.

Qin-shi felt somewhat awkward.

Contrarily, Wei Luo didn't really care. She sat down and continued talking about the advantages of using rouge and lipstick made from lotus flowers. Not much later, the dishes were brought up one and after another. Everyone forgot the recent episode. They waited until Duke Ying picked up the first bite of food before picking up their own chopsticks and started eating.

From beginning to end, Li Song's eyes were looking down. He didn't look across the table even once as if he didn't recognize Wei Luo and never had feelings that he shouldn't have had towards her.

## Chapter 97.2

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When lunch was half over, Wei Luo rubbed her nose and sneezed.

She had recently been sweating and came over here without changing clothes. Qin-shi was worried that she was getting sick and caringly asked, "Are you cold? How about you go back to change clothes? Otherwise, you might feel too cold later."

Wei Luo wasn't uncomfortable anywhere. But, she didn't want to eat lunch with Li Song, so she took the advantage of the situation for her benefit and agreed. She bid everyone farewell and walked away from the receiving room.

She walked in the verandah with Jin Lu at her side. Jin Lu long-windedly said, "Miss, isn't Prince Ru Yang's heir slightly too arrogant... When you greeted him before, he didn't even say a single word. This servant saw that Fifth Master's face didn't look good. I heard that Prince Ru Yang's heir used to be very overbearing. No one in the capital dares to offend him. I don't know if Fifth Miss's days will be good after marrying him..."

Wei Luo didn't respond.

She didn't have any interest towards these two people or cared if Wei Zheng was living well or not. She only felt that a marriage predestined by fate was too wonderful. These two people were actually paired up together. Wei Zheng selected this path. Li Song wasn't a good person to provoke. She would have to experience the various joys and sorrows of life by herself.

No one would be able to help her.

After Wei Luo tucked the hair that was hanging down behind her ear, she unhurriedly asked, "When did you start to like prattling about gossip?"

Jin Lu immediately shut up. She knew that she had said too much and obediently followed Wei Luo without saying another

word.

After they walked to end of the verandah and passed through a moon gate, the path to the inner part of the residence was in front of them. Just as Wei Luo was about to walk forward, something was suddenly thrown over here! It stably pierced the soil near her embroidered shoes and blocked her path. She lowered her head to look. It was a golden hairpin with emeralds. It looked slightly familiar.

Next to her, Jin Lu asked in surprise, "What is this? Who threw this?"

Wei Luo looked at it for a while, then she turned around to look behind her.

She saw Li Song standing not far away in the verandah without any expression. Wearing a brocaded robe, he looked pale and slender. Clearly, he had the appearance of a cool, young aristocrat. But against expectation, his eyebrows were low and his expression was indifferent. He gave off a feeling of a person who wasn't amendable to reason. Even when Wei Luo was looking at him, he didn't say a single word.

Jin Lu wanted to bend over to pick up the hairpin, but Wei Luo held onto her shoulder and wouldn't let her move.

She already recognized this hairpin. After she had used this hairpin to injure him, she hadn't taken it back. She hadn't expected that he would keep it until now.

Why did he come over here instead of staying in the receiving room to eat lunch?

Li Song looked at Wei Luo without moving. Just when Wei Luo thought he was going to open his mouth to speak, he turned around and left.

Not long after, he disappeared from Wei Luo's line of sight.

Jin Lu was very confused by this scene. She looked in the



direction that Li Song had left, then she looked at Wei Luo. "Miss, was this the hairpin that you had lost? Why was it with House Li's heir?"

Wei Luo didn't answer her. She turned around and walked through the moon gate.

Jin Lu continued to persistently ask, "Miss, do you still want this hairpin..."

She quietly said, "No, throw it away."

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House Wei's Fifth Miss was married, but the Fourth Miss didn't have an engagement. Many of women in the capital were overtly and secretly inquired about Wei Luo's marriage plans. After all, Wei Luo's reputation was very good and her appearance was exceptional. In the past, she had been engaged with Song Hui before she was born, so other people didn't dare to look as if they were considering. Now, the engagement was gone. The eyes of young men that were of marriageable age were all looking at Wei Luo.

Today was Qin-shi's father, Marquis An Lin's seventieth birthday. Duke Ying's entire family had been invited.

Of course, Wei Luo and Wei Chong Hong were attending.

Wei Luo was sitting together with Qin-shi. As soon as a madam saw her, her hopeful and desirous gaze would intentionally or unintentionally fall on Wei Luo's body to the point that Wei Luo felt uncomfortable. Wei Luo understood their meaning. Qin-shi had asked her if there was someone that she liked, but she shook her head to say no.

There was someone that she liked. That person was anxiously waiting for her to agree, so that he could come to her home to propose marriage.

Wei Luo found an excuse to leave and led Wei Chang Mi to the

pavilion at the back of the residence to play.

Wei Chang Mi had come here a few times before and could be counted as familiar with this place. Without any adults around to control him, he seemed to be scattering happiness as he held Wei Luo's hand and ran forward. "Older sister Ah Luo, there's a swing up front. Little maternal uncle specially made it for me. He said that I can play with it every time I come here!"

The little maternal uncle that he mentioned was Marquis An Lin's young son, Qin Ce. He was twenty-four years old this year. Qing Ce was mischievous as a child. As he grew up, he gradually curbed his playful temperament and started to attentively study the art of war. With some reservations, he could be considered accomplished.

Wei Luo followed behind Wei Chang Mi. Seeing that he was running so quickly, she frowned and reminded him. "Wei Chang Mi, don't run so fast. Be careful, you might fall..."

Wei Chang Mi listened to her words and stopped running. Step by step, he swiftly walked forward.

Laughter escaped from Wei Luo for a moment. She didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

After they passed a long corridor, the space in front of them suddenly opened. There was lush, thick banyan tree with a swing tied to it in the courtyard. If they continued walking forward on this path, they would reach the dooryard. The dooryard was where the men would be gathered for Marquis An Lin's birthday today.

(T/N: During these gatherings, women and men would usually be separated into two different places in the residence.)

Wei Chang Mi pulled Wei Luo forward as he rushed towards the swing. He suddenly stopped after seeing someone in the front and said in surprised, "Little maternal uncle!"

Wei Luo also stopped and lifted her eyes to look.

There were two people standing in the verandah in front of them. One was wearing a moon white robe with a persimmon stem pattern. He looked slightly familiar and somewhat resembled Qin-shi. He was probably the little maternal uncle that Wei Chang Mi had mentioned. The other person was wearing a dark green robe with a python pattern. The side of his face was handsome and his figure was tall and straight. Standing there, he had an indescribable essence that was as incomparable as jade...

Why was Zhao Jie here?

Zhao Jie hadn't seen her. His deep phoenix eyes were looking towards the front. She didn't know why he was looking so competitive or who he was looking at.

Wei Chang Mi pulled Wei Luo over there until they were a few steps away from Zhao Jie. She finally had a clear view of that person.

Wei Luo's heart dropped for a moment. This person had eaten breakfast and left the residence with her today... Wei Chang Mi impatiently called out, "Yi, is older brother Chang Hong also here?"

Wei Chang Hong was right across Zhao Jie. He was one head shorter than Zhao Jie, but he didn't seem like he was retreating at all. His thin lips were flattened into a line and his face was taut. Without blinking, he looked at the white jade hairpin on Zhao Jie's head and the hand inside his sleeve involuntarily clenched into a fist.

## Chapter 98.1

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The clamoring sounds from the guests toasting, drinking, and laughing in the dooryard kept traveling over here. It made the silence in the verandah all the more prominent.

Wei Luo froze for a moment. Soon after, she followed Chang Hong's line of sight to look at the top of Zhao Jie's head and very quickly realized what had happened. This was the jade hairpin that she had given him. Chang Hong must have recognized it...

What should she do? She didn't dare to go forward. She felt as if they were going to start fighting in the next moment.

Wei Luo originally intended to silently leave, but Wei Chang Mi's little maternal uncle, Qin Ce, turned his head to look at them and drew attention over to them by saying, "Oh, Chang Mi also came here to play?" His line of sight moved upwards and stopped on Wei Luo's face. He pondered for a moment before calling out her name, "This is... Chang Mi's older sister, niece Ah Luo?"

When Qin Ce was a teenager and Wei Luo was a young child, he often went to Duke Ying's residence. Although Wei Luo didn't recognize him, he recognized her.

It was probably because Wei Luo looked very similar to Jiang Miao Lan. Her beautiful face was like apricot blossoms, her cheeks were like peaches, her eyes were exquisitely marvelous, and her lips had the color of cherry blossoms. Before Jiang Miao Lan gave birth to Wei Luo and Wei Chang Hong, Qin Ce had a deep impression of her after meeting her a few times. Later, she had departed without any warning and left behind a son and daughter. Qin Ce had felt very regretful over this matter for a long time. Now, this son and daughter had grown up.

One had grown into a heroic looking young man and was standing right in front of him. The other had grown into a lovely and alluring young woman.

Hearing Qin Ce calling Wei Luo's name, Wei Chang Hong turned towards the sound to look.

Wei Luo resigned herself to the loss and slowly walked until her entire person was within Chang Hong's line of sight. Her voice stumbled twice before she slightly fawningly called out, "Chang Hong, why are you here?"

He looked at her with indignation, grievances, and hurt feelings. He recognized the hairpin on Zhao Jie's head. It was the hairpin that she had bought when she went outside to buy his gift. At the time, he thought she was going to give this to Song Hui. Although he was unhappy, he still grudgingly accepted it. When he had saw that this jade hairpin was with Zhao Jie, he had rushed over here to ask why. Did Ah Luo give this to Zhao Jie? What kind of relationship did they have?

Wei Chang Hong remained silent.

For a moment, he felt as if he was cheated. Wei Chang Hong stopped looking at Wei Luo with pitiful eyes and fiercely glared at Zhao Jie.

He must have coerced Ah Luo. Otherwise, how could Ah Luo like him? Not only was he almost ten years older than Ah Luo, his appearance wasn't as good as Song Hui's. If Ah Luo wasn't even attracted to Song Hui, then there was no way she would be interested in him.

Wei Chang Hong clenched the fist in his sleeves, walked forward, and opened his mouth to say, "You..."

Wei Luo thought he was going to hit Zhao Jie. After all, there was a precedent. Back when Li Song groped her during Spring Lantern Festival, didn't he also walk forward to punch Li Song? Thinking of this, Wei Luo hurriedly walked forward and grabbed Chang Hong's hand. With beseeching eyes, she anxiously said, "... Don't hit him."

After these words were said, Wei Chang Hong's body stiffened. His eyes were sorrowful and distressed.

Conversely, across from them, Zhao Jie curved his thin lips and had a smiling expression as he looked at the young girl. His recent fierceness faded.

Wei Luo didn't know why she had rushed forward. At the time, she had just wanted to stop Zhao Jie from being hit. She hadn't thought about how this would be the same as tacitly agreeing that she had a relationship with Zhao Jie. A trace of regret swept across her face. This was really vexing. Chang Hong inverse her grip on his hand and turned around to lead her away. She could only helplessly follow him. Before she could take more than a step, her other hand was grabbed by Zhao Jie.

Zhao Jie stood in place. His lips were smiling, but his gaze was burning. "Don't go."

He seemed relaxed, but in reality, he was using some force to hold her. It wasn't enough to hurt Wei Luo, but she also wouldn't be able to easily break free.

Sure enough, Wei Luo wasn't able to pull her hand away when she tried.

She annoyedly thought, what were these two people thinking? They weren't at home. This was Marquis An Lin's residence. Fortunately, there wasn't anyone else in the verandah this time. If someone else saw, what would happen to her reputation?

While Wei Luo was worrying about this, Qin Ce smiled as if he was watching a good play. "My study is near here. How about I bring you over there to drink a cup of tea or sit down to talk?"

Wei Chang Hong stopped, but he didn't say anything.

Zhao Jie also declined to comment.

Seeing that no one was refusing, Qin Ce gestured for them to follow him with a smile. "Then, follow this one."

Qin Ce had a good relationship with Zhao Jie. The two of them often talked outside of public gatherings. When Zhao Jie was planning on how to deploy Wu Jiang's troops, Qin Ce would often give him advice and ideas. Qin Ce could be counted as Zhao Jie's trusted advisor.

The group of people arrived at the study. Qin Ce pushed open the doors, invited them inside, took out a jar from the shelves, sat down at the marble table carved with chrysanthemum flowers, used a silver teaspoon to scoop out tea leaves from the jar, poured them inside the teapot decorated with clouds, and covered the teapot. He didn't sit down for a long time. He had the discernment to bring Wei Chang Mi away. "Prince Jing and Sixth Young master, take your time to talk. I'll bring Mi-er outside to walk around."

Zhao Jie fiddled with the jade ring around his thumb and quietly made a sound of acknowledgement.

Wei Chang Mi wasn't willing to leave. Lying against Qin Ce's shoulder, he said, "I don't want to go. I want to be together with older sister Ah Luo. Little maternal uncle.."

Qin Ce patted his butt, smiled, and said, "Let's go. Little maternal uncle will push you on the swings."

Silly child, your older sister Ah Luo doesn't have time to pay attention to you.

## Chapter 98.2

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The mood in the study wasn't good.

Wei Luo stared at the teapot in front of her. After the tea was ready, she poured it into three black cups that had a bamboo and bird pattern. One cup went to Chang Hong, another cup was left for herself, and just as she was about bring the third cup to Zhao Jie, Chang Hong coldly looked at her. She paused, lowered her head, and slowly said, "I'll drink two cups."

Wei Chang Hong's held his teacup tighter and his veins became more prominent. Wei Luo was worried that if she continued to speak, Wei Chang Hong would start attacking Zhao Jie. She lowered her head and silently drank the tea.

After the tea had slightly cooled down, Wei Chang Hong drank the tea in one gulp without caring about how hot it was. After mulling over the issue, he slowly asked, "Ah Luo, did you give him that jade hairpin?"

Wei Luo sipped her tea and quietly said, "En."

Wei Chang Hong didn't know how describe the feeling in his heart. It felt slightly sour and stuffy. If it was Song Hui, then fine. Although he didn't like Song Hui, he had already come to terms with giving Wei Luo to him. But, Zhao Jie's sudden appearance out of nowhere had crushed his emotional preparation. His body felt unwell as if he had suffered an enormous shock.

Why did it have to be him? He used to think that Zhao Jie's demeanor and identity didn't match, but he reluctantly let that thought go. But now, no matter how he looked at him, Zhao Jie was unpleasing to look at.

When Wei Luo was a child, she had been Zhao Liuli's study companion and had met Zhao Jie several times. But, most of the time she would either see him in the palace or right outside of the



place. They very rarely openly met in Duke Ying's residence. So, although Wei Chang Hong knew this person existed, he didn't know about his relationship with Wei Luo.

Wei Luo had also intentionally never mentioned this to him. It was only today that he found out and suspected.

Wei Chang Hong lifted his eyes and viciously looked at Zhao Jie while asking Wei Luo, "When you went out last time, was it to buy a gift for him and on the way you brought a gift for me?"

Wei Luo repeatedly shook her head. That really wasn't true. If this was the reason why he was mad, then she was willing to explain. "Of course not. I went outside to buy you a gift. I only bought the jade hairpin incidentally."

At this moment, Zhao Jie almost stopped smiling.

Wei Chang Hong's expression became slightly better. After thinking, he asked, "Your engagement with Song Hui... Was it canceled because of him?"

Wei Luo shook her head again and honestly said, "That wasn't the reason. I wanted to cancel the engagement with older brother Song Hui a long time ago. Even if there wasn't older brother Prince Jing, I would still do this."

The corner of Zhao Jie's mouth went down. His expression slightly sunk.

Contrarily, Wei Chang Hong's mood was gradually improving. There was a hint of a smile on his lips. He thought that Zhao Jie wasn't that important in Wei Luo's heart. "Then, why did you give him a jade hairpin? What kind of relationship do you have with him? Ah Luo, did he take advantage of your youth and inexperience? Did he threaten you with his status?"

Zhao Jie's eyes were covered in a layer of haze, "..."

He raised his phoenix eyes and looked at Wei Luo as if he was waiting to hear her answer.

Wei Lou froze for a moment. She soon lightly shook her head. "It's not like that. Where did your mind go?" She lowered her long eyelashes and blocked the flow of brilliant light in her eyes. "We mutually like each other."

Zhao Jie stared at her. This was the first time that he heard the young girl say she truly liked him. He had questioned her countless times, but she had always refused to clearly state her affection for him. Now, facing Wei Chang Hong, she had finally said these honest words. He supported his chin and fixed his gaze on the young girl across from him. He was waiting for her to say the other words that he wanted to hear.

Under his gaze, Wei Luo felt even more embarrassed. Burning redness went from her ears to her bright, slender, white jade neck. Her long eyelashes fluttered. Slowly and firmly, she said, "Older brother Prince Jing treats me very well... He protected me since I was a child. No matter what I did, he would fix my mess. I used to think of him as an older brother, but not anymore. Chang Hong, I don't want to marry older brother Song Hui, but I want to marry older brother Prince Jing."

This could be considered a very bold expression of opinion.

After all, Wei Luo's face wasn't thick. Before she finished speaking, her face was completely red. Her gleaming eyes turned, but she wouldn't look at Zhao Jie.

Hearing these words, Wei Chang Hong was silent for a long time.

Contrarily, the smile on Zhao Jie's lips became bigger and bigger. It was a sharp contrast to Chang Hong. He couldn't restrain his emotions. He grabbed the hand that Wei Luo had placed on the table and squeezed her hand. "Dearest..."

Wei Luo slapped his hand away and gave him a seething look. "Don't touch me."

Chang Hong was here and he still dared to act so unrestrained.

Did he still want his reputation? If he hadn't worn that jade hairpin outside, how could this current situation have happened? When all was said and done, he had made the error of showing off.

Zhao Jie smiled and took his hand back, "Okay."

Wei Chang Hong naturally didn't miss seeing this. The shock he had received wasn't light. After sitting in a daze for a long time, he stood up and asked Zhao Jie, "When do you plan on proposing marriage?"

Zhao Jie lifted his eyes to look at him. "The day after tomorrow."

Wei Chang Hong slowly nodded and seemed to have made a serious decision. He pulled Wei Luo up from the chair and started walking towards the door. "Then, before the wedding, it would be best if you don't see Wei Luo."

Wei Luo hurriedly put down the teacup before following after him.

Chang Hong walked out of the doorway. Just as she was about to take the first step past the threshold, a hand came out from behind, suddenly wrapped around her waist, and gently held her back.

Surprised, she stiffly let go of Chang Hong's hand. Before she had time to call out, the doors in front of her were closed. The room was isolated from outside.

After Zhao Jie turned around and pressed her against the door, he stared at her small face. Her recent words kept echoing in his mind. Even when Wei Chang Hong told him to not see her, he didn't take it seriously. He leaned over to kiss her lips. "Your little lips are so sweet. Let me taste them to see if you rubbed honey on them."

Wei Luo whimpered and closed her eyes. She couldn't help standing on her tiptoes to meet his kiss.

His hand went inside her clothes and paused when it reached her

delicate, silky, jade-like flesh. Soon after, he unhesitatingly went inside her dudou and wantonly rubbed.

Wei Luo couldn't resist closing her eyes. Translucent saliva came out from her lips. Her soft cheeks were red. Zhao Jie finally kissed her enough and let her go. He used his thumb to wipe away the saliva on her lips and hoarsely said, "En, sweeter than honey."

Wei Luo's cheeks were flushed red. She opened her mouth and bit his thumb.

Outside, Chang Hong stood in front of the doors. He clearly heard everything that had happened inside. His face was ashen. He really regretted not punching Zhao Jie's face.

# Chapter 99.1

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Inside Qing Xi Palace's Zhao Yang Hall, Empress Chen was sitting on a rattan, arhat couch and reclining against a pillow. She was opening and looking through picture scrolls. Each painted picture had a young woman with a refined appearance that was as lovely as a flower. They each had a different posture and expression. Their only similarity was that they were all in the prime of their youth.

Empress Chen looked through these pictures several times and said to Mama Qiu, "Are these the only girls that have good family backgrounds?"

Mama Qiu was kneeling next to the couch. As she was massaging Empress Chen's legs, she said, "They're all here. Does Your Majesty not like any of them?"

Empress Chen seemed slightly disappointed. Without a better option, she looked through the pictures again, but in the end, she didn't like any of them. She sighed, took out one of the paintings, showed it to Mama Qiu, and said, "Although the Director of Board of Right's daughter looks pretty, her eyes are too far apart. At first sight, it looks slightly strange..."

Then, she shook her head and held out another painting to show Mama Qiu. "And, this Taifu Liu's granddaughter, doesn't she look too thin? She looks too fragile. Her front and back look equally flat. The areas that should be curved and raised aren't. She won't easily be able to give birth."

One by one, Empress Chen commented on all of the paintings. If they weren't too thin, then their physiognomy wasn't good. Anyways, none of them were good. Listening to this, Mama Qiu sweated profusely. She didn't know how to respond.

Mama Qiu secretly sighed. These girls had to be extremely outstanding for her to like any of them. Empress Chen had seen

too many beautiful girls like Gao Dan Yang, Gao Qing Yang, and Wei Luo. These three young women were full of life, especially Duke Ying's family's Fourth Miss, Wei Luo. Mama Qiu didn't know how to describe Wei Luo's appearance in words. She could only say that Wei Luo was truly good-looking and very pleasing to look at.

Listening to Empress Chen speak, Mama Qiu could only repeatedly comfort her, "Your Majesty, don't be anxious. Perhaps, His Highness Prince Jing just hasn't met a girl that he likes. If you bring these portraits to him, perhaps, Prince Jing might like one of them?"

If this were true, then Empress Chen wouldn't have to worry.

She was worried that her son didn't like women. When the time comes, it might even be a problem to get him to marry someone. It would be even less likely for him to have a chubby child.

By chance, Zhao Liuli walked into the hall at this time with her skirt lifted as she passed through the entrance. Seeing that the rattan, arhat couch was covered in picture scrolls, she opened her mouth in surprise, "Imperial mother, what are you preparing? Why are there so many picture scrolls?"

Empress Chen had just been worried over not having a person to help her. She hurriedly called Liuli to her side. She pulled her hand and asked, "Help imperial mother look. Do you know what type of girl Jie-er likes? I looked through all of these scrolls and didn't like any of them. I looked at them to the point that my eyes feel blurry."

Zhao Liuli paused. She vaguely understood Empress Chen's intention.

She was at an impasse. Should she be looking for a wife for her older brother?

She moved closer, sat down next to Empress Chen, and put on act of looking of looking through the painted scrolls. In the end, she

shook her head and said, "None of them look good."

Empress Chen nodded in agreement.

However, Zhao Liuli's following words let her have hope again. Zhao Liuli said, "Imperial brother doesn't like this type..."

Empress Chen immediately became spirited. She curiously asked, "Oh, do you know what type he likes?"

"I know." Zhao Liuli curved her limpid eyes. In her mind, she imagined Wei Luo's image and deliberately kept Empress Chen in suspense for a moment before saying, "Imperial brother is really picky. The girl that he likes must be beautiful... And, it can't be an ordinary beautiful. She has to be unreasonably beautiful and exquisite. Her skin has to be white and her face has to look rich and noble. Her personality can't be bad... It would be the best if her voice also sounded pleasant."

Empress Chen had originally been in high spirits. The more she heard, the more she felt that Zhao Liuli was joking with her. She poked Zhao Liuli's forehead and said, "What are you saying? You listed so many requirements. Where should I go to find a person like that? Do you intentionally want your imperial brother to be single for the rest of his life?"

Zhao Liuli felt like she was being wronged. How was this her fault? Imperial brother liked Wei Luo. She was only describing Wei Luo's attributes. Wei Luo wasn't lacking in any aspect.

The strange thing was that Empress Chen had considered so many girls, but she hadn't thought about Zhao Liuli's previous study companion, Wei Luo. It was probably because Wei Luo was already engaged. Empress Chen hadn't heard the news about Song Hui and Wei Luo's engagement, so she momentarily hadn't considered Wei Luo yet.

Zhao Liuli flattened her mouth and didn't continue to offer advice. She lowered her head and seemed to be focused with

fiddling with the green sachet embroidered with lotus flowers on her waist. There was a faint smile on her lips. When she was staying at Zi Yu Vila, Yang Zhen had left the mountain to buy her this sachet. He had dried all of the flower petals inside the sachet. It was hard to imagine a warrior clumsily drying out flower petals in the sun. As soon as Zhao Liuli thought of that image, she couldn't resist smiling.



## Chapter 99.2

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Empress Chen saw that Liuli was smilingly foolishly and called her name, "Liuli, where did that sachet come from? You've been wearing it every day, but I haven't seen it before."

Zhao Liuli hurriedly looked up, blinked, and said, "Ah Luo gave this to me. She also personally dried the flower petals inside."

Empress Chen knew that Wei Luo grew flowers in a greenhouse in her free time, so she didn't have suspicious. "It's very unique."

Zhao Liuli brought the sachet in front of her and smilingly asked, "It also smells very good. Imperial mother, do you want to smell?"

Empress Chen waved her hand to refuse. She thought of something else and asked, "I heard that you met Duke Ding's Third Young Master at Zi Yu Villa?"

Zhao Liuli had to think for a long time to remember that person. Confused about this question, she only nodded.

Empress Chen continued to ask, "Do you remember playing with him during your childhood? He had also given you a small pinwheel when you were young. At the time, you really liked it."

Empress Chen didn't like going outside. She would only occasionally walk around in the imperial garden and spent the rest of the time in Qing Xi Palace. When she was bored, the thing that made her worry the most was her children's marriages. Zhao Jie alone was already enough to worry about. She would also occasionally think about Zhao Liuli. For Zhao Liuli to safely grow up to fifteen years old, this was Empress Chen's greatest fortune in this lifetime. Originally, she wasn't willing for Zhao Liuli to marry. It would be the best if she could always keep her at her side so she could take care of her.

However, her daughter had grown up. In the end, she still had to get married. There was a phrase that the common people said that

was very good. If you keep a daughter that had grown up at home, she will grow to hate her parents. She didn't want Liuli to hate her. Even if she didn't want to part with her, she still had to start looking for a good husband for her.

Zhao Liuli lowered her head, traced the pattern on the scented bag, and mumbled, "I don't remember."

Empress Chen wasn't discouraged by her words. Instead, she became talkative and continued to chatter, "I recently saw House Gao's Third Young Master. After not seeing him for so many years, he's already grown into a handsome young man... He still remembers you. We talked about interesting stories from your childhood. Unexpectedly, he still clearly remembers things that even I've forgotten..."

"Imperial mother." Zhao Liuli interrupted her. She pouted and said, "I don't want to listen to this. Could we not talk about this?"

She wasn't an idiot. Of course, she understood why Empress Chen was saying these words.

She had reached a marriageable age and had to get married. But, how should she tell imperial mother? She didn't like Gao Cong Xun or anyone else. She only liked older brother Yang Zhen.

Zhao Liuli was very distressed.

Fortunately, Mama Qiu helped her out of her dilemma.

Mama Qiu bowed with both hands and reported, "Your Majesty, His Highness Prince Jing is here to see you."

Empress Chen said, "Oh." As expected, this attracted her attention and she looked towards the entrance. Not much time later, Zhao Jie walked inside. He was wearing a deep black robe with a lingzhi mushroom pattern, a jade waist accessory, and ink-colored boots with golden embroidery. He walked in front of Empress Chen, saluted, and said, "Imperial son greets imperial mother."

Empress Chen called him closer, carefully looked him over, and very curiously asked, "Why are you so neatly dressed today? It couldn't be that you're meeting someone important?"

Zhao Jie sat down on a pine stool, curved his lips, and leisurely said, "Other than paying respect to imperial mother, who else would your imperial son meet in the palace?"

Empress Chen didn't believe his words and coldly said, "You still know to pay respect to imperial mother? I don't know what you've been busy with lately. You haven't entered the palace in a while. I thought you've already forgot about me."

Zhao Jie stood up, smiled, and said, "Your Imperial son wouldn't dare."

She hadn't had time to close the painted scrolls on the couch. As soon as he looked up, he saw them. The first portrait was Taifu Liu's granddaughter. Her name was Liu Yin. Empress Chen had recently said she was too thin. The smiling young woman in the painting was wearing a green, crepe robe and holding a folded willow basket. Her face looked good, but it wasn't full enough. It felt as if there were only bones left in her body. There wasn't the slightest sense of beauty.

Empress Chen noticed his gaze, quickly followed it, and suddenly realized something. Her mind finally went to serious matters. "Since you're here today, take these paintings to look. Do you like any of these girls? If there is, tell this empress. This empress will advocate for your marriage. If there isn't, this empress will look for other girls for you."

She had made up her mind to force him to marry.

There was a hint of a smile on Zhao Jie's thin lips. For the very first time, he didn't refused. Instead, he walked forward, picked up that painted scroll, and seriously looked at it.

Startled, Empress Chen looked at him. She had thought he would

definitely refuse and was extremely surprised that he would obediently agree.

Zhao Jie ordered a servant to bring a brush. Holding a purple brush, he looked at the paintings one by one and marked a cross as he looked through them. After looking at more than ten painting scrolls, he still made same mark on each of them.

Empress Chen furrowed her eyebrows. Just as she was about to ask, he put down the painted scroll, stood up, and said, "To respond to imperial mother, your imperial son isn't interest in any of these girls."

Empress Chen thought her recent happiness was a waste. He didn't look serious at all. He had clearly only said those words as an excuse! Empress Chen was very angry and intentionally asked another question, "Then where's the girl that you like?"

He looked and smiled, "She's not one of the scrolls."

Could he be serious? Empress Chen's eyes brightened. She had originally thought he was only trying to fool her. Was she wrong? She impatiently asked, "Who is she? Where is she?"

Zhao Jie's phoenix eyes softened. A long time later, he slowly said, "She's from Duke Ying's family."

# Chapter 100.1

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Duke Ying has five granddaughters. First Miss had married a while ago. Second Miss was recently engaged. Fifth Miss Wei Zheng was recently married into Prince Ru Yang's family. Currently, there was only Third Miss and Fourth Miss left. Empress Chen hadn't talked with Third Miss Wei Ya, only Fourth Miss Wei Luo. Hearing Zhao Jie's words, she opened her eyes wider in surprise. All sorts of feelings welled up in her heart as she asked, "Is... Is it that girl?"

Even though she asked this question, she had already made a decision.

Duke Ying's third granddaughter, Wei Ya, wasn't particularly outstanding. She had seen her a few times during palace banquets. Wei Ya's bearing was overcautious and slightly small-minded... She didn't have a strong impression of her. Zhao Jie would probably have less of an impression. However, Wei Luo was different. Wei Luo had been Zhao Liuli's study companion when she was a child. Later, she was Zhao Liuli's best friend. They had practically grown up together. Zhao Jie had often seen her and treated her like a younger sister. Sometimes, he would look at her a few more times.

Empress Chen felt as if five bottles of different emotions had been knocked over in her heart. She was nervous and apprehensive. Was it Wei Luo? Why hadn't she thought of her previously?

Wei Luo was fourteen years old this year. But, she kept thinking of her as ten to twelve year old girl.

Every time that girl came to the palace, she would always bring happiness to Liuli. At such a young age, she was already so charming and exquisite. Her teeth were white and her eyes were like precious gems. Her clever, little mouth had the gift of gab. If

she could become her daughter-in-law, it would be very wonderful...

But after Empress Chen thought more, she became slightly worried. What if it was Third Miss Wei Ya instead of Wei Luo? She really couldn't tell what type of preferences her son had!

Empress Chen's hands were squeezed so tightly that her palms were sweaty and she could only wait to hear Zhao Jie's reply.

Sitting next to her on the arhat couch, Zhao Liuli secretly smiled like a little mouse stealing kerosene. Her smile was both proud and secretly delighted.

Zhao Jie didn't disappoint her expectations. Word by word, he slowly said, "It's Fourth Miss, Wei Luo."

Empress Chen suddenly felt as if she heard a giant stone in her heart dropping. The jolt of surprise turned the stone into dust. Her son really liked Wei Luo... Empress Chen felt happy, but her mood also felt complicated. When did Zhao Jie become interested in that young girl? Every time that he refused to be married, was it because of Ah Luo? Zhao Jie would sometimes come to Zhao Yang Hall when Ah Luo was also here. But, she had never seen her son show any sign of unusual behavior in front of her at Zhao Yang Hall! He really could pretend. If he liked Wei Luo, why didn't he tell her? Why did he hide this from her? It couldn't be that he was worried that she would eat Wei Luo, right?

As soon as she thought of this, Empress Chen felt anxious. Her son had become interested in that young girl a long time ago.

Empress Chen's mood went up and down. First, she felt pleasantly surprised. Then, her mood became complicated. Suddenly, she thought of a problem and her mood quickly changed again. Panic-stricken, she asked, "Isn't Ah Luo engaged to Count Zhong Yi's grandson, Song Hui? If you like her, are you planning on snatching her from Count Zhong Yi's family?"

Zhao Luli ate a piece of pea pastry, brightly smiled at Empress Chen, and said, "Imperial mother, Ah Luo's engagement with Song Hui has already been canceled. You didn't know?"

Empress Chen really didn't know.

After Zhao Liuli mentioned this, she finally smiled after the flash of insight and all was clear. She anxiously asked Zhao Jie, "What are your plans? Have you talked with Duke Ying or the emperor yet? What was their reaction?"

Zhao Jie calmly said, "I haven't talked with imperial father yet. Your imperial son is planning on getting Duke Ying's permission first, then asking imperial father to bestow this marriage."

"This is good..." Empress Chen nodded. She felt delighted from the bottom of her heart. How could she not be happy? There was finally a solution to her son's marriage. She had been worrying about this problem for so long. She had like Wei Luo to begin with. Now that Wei Luo had solved the problem of her son's major life event, she felt even more partial towards her. But, she suddenly thought of something else and worriedly asked, "Chang Sheng, aren't you nine years older than Ah Luo? The age gap is a bit too big. Will Duke Ying agree? That stubborn old man follows rules inflexibly. What will you do if he doesn't agree?"

Zhao Jie saw down in a rosewood chair. He paused with bringing the teacup closer. "Is nine years a lot?"

On the side, Zhao Liuli swallowed the bean pastry in her mouth and scrambled to say, "It isn't. It's better if you're old. Old people will know how to love and care for another person dearly."

Zhao Jie, "..."

Empress Chen lifted her hand and knocked Zhao Liuli's head. She helplessly said, "How could you say such words to your older brother?"

Zhao Liuli held her head. Because the mood in the room was

good, she wasn't as scared of Zhao Jie. She said to him, "Older brother, I was only joking. Don't take it seriously. You're only nine years older than Ah Luo. It's not ten years yet. Only ten years would be too old. You're only considered slightly old."

Zhao Jie couldn't continue listening. He stood up and said to Empress Chen, "Imperial mother, if there's nothing else, your imperial son will return home to prepare."

At this moment, Empress Chen was eagerly looking forward to Zhao Jie bringing her daughter-in-law home. She immediately waved her hand to indicate for him to leave. She didn't have the slightest intention of urging him to stay.

Zhao Jie immediately left. Empress Chen impatiently called Zhao Liuli closer, pinched her little face, and intentionally made her face look serious as she asked, "Tell imperial mother, did you already know about this?"

Zhao Liuli brightly smiled, burrowed herself into Empress Chen's arms, and flatly denied, "What's imperial mother saying? Why can't I understand what you're saying?"

There was a scale in her heart. She was considering Wei Luo's reputation. She shouldn't tell other people about her relationship with Zhao Jie. So, no matter how Empress Chen asked, she kept shaking her head and pretending to not know.

In the end, Empress Chen could only give up on getting an answer from her.

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After leaving Zhao Yang Hall, Zhao Jie took his usual customary, small path to leave the palace.

It was currently early autumn. On both sides of the path, there was abundant grass. Not far away, there was a flowering pomegranate tree. Its fiery red flowers were splendid and gorgeous. Zhao Jie walked another two steps, then he suddenly



stopped. Soon after, he continued walking without any change in his expression. Seeing this, the woman that had been next to the tree hurriedly chased after him. She was wearing a peach pink robe embroidered with butterflies and flowers. She blocked his path and asked, "Older cousin Jing, do you really like Wei Luo? Are you going to Duke Ying's residence to propose marriage? Are you going to marry her?"

Zhao Jie stopped and looked at the worried girl in front of him. In the face of turmoil, he calmly asked, "Does this have anything to do with you?"

These words were a heavy blow to Gao Dan Yang.

How could this not have anything to do with her? Originally, she was going to marry him. But, Wei Luo had appeared out of nowhere and had taken away everything that should belong to her. She had been about to go to Zhao Yang Hall to pay respect to Empress Chen, but when she walked to Zhao Yang Hall's doors, she had heard their words and didn't go inside. Instead, she stood outside to wait for a little bit. She hadn't expected to hear that information!

## Chapter 100.2

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As expected, Zhao Jie liked Wei Luo. Her premonition hadn't been wrong.

For a man to care that much about a young girl, other than him liking her, what other possibility could there be?

All of this had been within her expectations. But, when she actually heard Zhao Jie admit to this, she still felt shocked. Apart from shock, she couldn't resign herself. She didn't think she was inferior to Wei Luo. When she had been in the prime of her youth, Wei Luo was still an immature, silly little girl. What was it about her that interested Zhao Jie?

Feeling wronged, Gao Dang Yang looked up with red eyes and asked, "What about me?"

Hearing her question, there wasn't any change in Zhao Jie's expression. His gaze was focused on a far away place. "Find someone else to marry. This prince definitely won't marry you."

Then, he walked around her to continue walking down the path.

Gao Dan Yang instinctively clutched his sleeve, tightly grasped it in her palm, and made her greatest concession by saying, "Why not... if older cousin wants to marry Wei Luo, I don't mind being your second wife."

Gao Dan Yang felt that her decision was very selfless. She couldn't have imagined that in his eyes she was only showering affection on an uninterested person.

Zhao Jie furrowed his eyebrows, flung her hand away from his sleeve, and coldly said, "You're willing to wrong yourself, but I'm not willing to wrong Ah Luo."

Gao Dan Yang's face paled. She was viciously humiliated by his words. She stiffened and didn't move.

Even when Zhao Jie had walked far away, she was still blankly standing there.

A girl wearing sky blue robes with loose sleeves walked out from behind the pomegranate tree. She looked very similar to Gao Dan Yang.

Standing next to Gao Dan Yang, Gao Qing Yang indifferently said, "Older sister, older cousin Prince Jing has already said things so clearly. Just follow mother's and maternal aunt's arrangement by marrying Elder Xu Ge's son. I've seen his painted scroll. He doesn't look bad... His character is also good."

Gao Dan Yang's cheeks cooled. She covered her eyes with her silk handkerchief and in a sobbing tone, she said, "What do you know... Do you have someone that you like? Do you know how bad my heart feels? I would rather become a nun than marry Elder Xu Ge's son!"

Gao Qing Yang was silent for a moment. Soon, she slowly said, "Oh. I don't have anyone I like. But if there is someone that I like, I wouldn't stubbornly chase after him. If he doesn't like me, then I'll just find someone else."

At this moment, Gao Dang Yang couldn't hear her words. She looked at the direction that Zhao Jie had left in and her tears increased.

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After the summer heat passed, the temperature became slightly cooler. Wei Luo was very happy. She didn't have to continue staying in her room to enjoy cooler air and to avoid profusely sweating.

In a few days, it would be Mid-Autumn Festival. Everyone in Duke Ying's residence was busy. They had to prepare items to offer their ancestors in worship and to prepare for the reunion dinner. Old Madam placed a huge importance to this type of holiday.

She had already ordered that no one could leave the residence that day. Everyone had to attend the reunion dinner. Today, she had called her family to the main room in the her courtyard to discuss the reunion dinner. For example, where should the dinner be held? Should they drink osmanthus flower wine or rose wine during the banquet? After dinner, where should they go to pay respect to the moon? And other trifling matters...

As Old Madam and her daughter-in-laws discussed, Wei Luo, Wei Ya, and Wei Dong idly sat on the side and listened.

Wei Luo wasn't close with Wei Ya. They rarely spoke to each other.

Fortunately, Wei Dong was sitting between them. Wei Dong had a straightforward personality and was very talkative, so there wasn't an awkward silence.

The ambience could be considered harmonious.

Somehow, the topic of marriage came up in their elders' conversation.

Old Madam looked at the girls sitting on the couch and sincerely said, "After New Year's, Dong-er will be married. Ya Ya and Ah Luo's marriages can't be delayed."

Wei Luo lowered her eyes, held a colorful teacup, and said, "Ah Luo is still young. I want to keep paternal grandmother company for a few more years."

Old Madam smiled as if she enjoyed hearing her words very much.

Wei Ya was older than Wei Luo. It wouldn't be Wei Luo's turn until after Wei Ya was married. Old Madam was also currently considered this point, so the focus didn't turn to Wei Luo. Old Madam and her daughter-in-laws started discussing Wei Ya's marriage. On the side, Wei Ya listened and shyly blushed. She felt too embarrassed to look up.

With her head lowered, Wei Luo drank her tea, but her ears were perked up to listen to her elders' words.

Please read from the original source at [fuyuneko dot org](http://fuyuneko.org). It's very discouraging to see people reading stolen translations from aggregator sites after I spent hours translating.

Third Madam Liu-shi kept looking at Wei Luo. She suddenly said, "I have a nephew on my parents' side. He's sixteen years old this year. His age is close to Ah Luo's and his personality is straightforward and honest. He's a worthy person for a marriage partner. Last year, he passed the provincial imperial examination and he's currently preparing to take the metropolitan imperial examination. If he can pass the examination and get the emperor's approval, he'll bring honor to his entire family. If Ah Luo..."

Liu-shi had never forgotten about the dowry that she had given Wei Luo. Until now, she had thought about this constantly. Every time she thought about this, her heart would ache. Her thoughts were simple. Once Wei Luo married her nephew and became part of her family, wouldn't that jewelry be returned to her hands? In addition, after getting Wei Luo, her family would have another connection to Duke Ying's family. Once that happened, Duke Ying would financially assist her parents' family. This was killing two birds with one stone.

Before she could finish speaking, Fourth Madam Qin-shi put down her teacup and disagreed, "Ah Luo is the daughter of a legal wife. Third sister-in-law's nephew is born from a concubine."

How could he be worthy? Although she didn't say those words, everyone else understood her meaning.

Third Madam had been poked in her sore spot. Her parents' family was in decline. Everyone had been looking down on them during the past several years. Now, there was finally a nephew that could bring honor to their family from passing the provincial imperial examination. She naturally wanted to improve her own

standing. "Fourth sister-in-law, what are you trying to say? So what if he was born from a concubine? Isn't Song Hui also..."

After saying half of her question, she immediately stopped.

But, it was already too late. Old Madam glared at her for bring up that topic and in a displeased tone, she said, "Let's talk about this topic later. If your nephew want to marry a daughter from House Wei, then wait until he passes the metropolitan imperial examination first."

Liu-shi's face became red. She quickly lowered her head and made a sound of acknowledgement.

Holding a teacup, Wei Luo had the cool eyes of a bystander.

The room became quiet. A servant girl wearing a blue robe came to the door and said, "Old Madam, His Highness Prince Jing has come to request a meeting."

Old Madam hurriedly lowered the needlework in her hands. Surprised, she asked, "Prince Jing is here? Is he here to see Duke Ying? Duke Ying recently left the residence. I'm afraid that he won't be return anytime soon..."

The servant girl shook her head and said, "His Highness Prince Jing said he came here to see you." She paused before saying, "He came here to propose marriage."

# Chapter 101.1

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As soon as these words were said, the room was in an uproar.

Old Madam and the other madams couldn't remain calm and collected.

His Highness Prince Jing had come here to propose marriage. Which Miss was he going to ask for marriage? Third Miss Wei Ya and Fourth Miss Wei Luo were the only two eligible girls in their residence. Third Madam Liu-shi's eyes brightened. Could it be her daughter?

Soon, Old Madam regained her composure. She picked up her cane that was decorated with roses and cloud. As she walked towards outside, she said, "Hurry, help me walk over there so I can look."

First Madam and Fourth Madam stepped forward to lend an arm to support her and walk together to the receiving room. Second Madam and Third Madam looked at each other, then they closely followed after.

A moment later, Wei Luo was the only one person left in the previously lively room. Wei Luo looked at their departing figures, then she leisurely followed behind them. Unlike the others, she wasn't the slightest bit anxious. Her eyes were concentrated on a goal. No one else noticed that the corner of her lips was raised in a smile and her eyes were curved into crescent moons.

Of course, she knew why he was here... She was the person that Zhao Jie wanted to marry.

There was also an unpleasant feeling of clearly knowing something but unable to say.

In the receiving room, Old Madam and the other madams were sitting on ironwood chairs. They were sitting upright and very still. Zhao Jie was sitting across from them. He was wearing a navy

blue robe with lotus flower stem pattern, a jade hat, and a waist accessory with a jade hornless dragon. He looked more formal than usual. He didn't bring anyone else other than Zhu Geng.

Zhao Jie stood up and properly saluted Old Madam. "Old Madam."

How could Old Madam accept his salute? She hurriedly stood up to lend him a hand to stand up. She anxiously said, "Your Highness, this old lady doesn't deserve this. Your Highness, please sit."

Zhao Jie straightened. He didn't refuse and sat down on one of the chairs. He looked around and asked, "Is Duke Ying not here today?"

Old Madam cautiously said, "This old lady has already ordered people to bring him back. If your Highness has something he needs to say to Old Master, I'm afraid that you'll have to wait for a while."

He thought for a moment, then he smiled and said, "That's fine. If I say this to Old Madam, it'll be the same."

A servant girl wearing a green robe came over with a purple tray outlined in gold to bring tea. She placed a colorful cup next to him. He held the cup and his thumb gently went back and forth over the cup's cover. He seemed to be mulling over an issue for a long time. He slowly said, "This prince came here for one thing."

Old Madam's heart tightened. "Your Highness, please say."

He paused for a moment. After a while, he said, "This prince greatly admires and adores House Wei's Fourth Miss Wei Luo."

It really was Wei Luo.

When Old Madam had heard that he came here to propose marriage, she had already secretly guessed this. Currently, there were two unmarried girls in the residence. If it wasn't Wei Ya, then it was Wei Luo. In every aspect, Wei Luo was more outstanding



than Wei Ya. To hear him say Wei Luo, it was reasonable.

However, Old Madam didn't understand. How did Prince Jing become interested in Ah Luo?

Among those seated, Third Madam Liu-shi was the most disappointed. She had thought that Zhao Jie was interested in her daughter, Wei Ya. She hadn't expected that it would be Wei Luo.

Old Madam hesitated for a while as she deliberated the words that she would say. "This old lady will boldly ask a question. Ah Luo's engagement with Count Zhong Yi's family was only recently canceled. Your Highness, when did you..."

After saying up to this point, she stopped and didn't continue. However, these words were enough to let other people understand her question.

Zhao Jie lowered his eyes as he pondered. To answer this question, he would have to give careful consideration to Wei Luo's reputation. He also couldn't seem too frivolous. In a short while, he seriously said, "I won't hide it. This prince has greatly admired Fourth Miss for a long time."

His voice was hoarse as if he was a person that had been traveling in a desert for a long time. And now, he finally saw a lake full of blue water in front of him. He held the cup and in a sincere tone, he said, "Ah Luo frequently comes to the palace. By fate, this prince has met her a few times. This prince admires her pure and kind heart. She is attractive and intelligent. This prince didn't dare to be rash since she was already engaged before she was born, so I could only suppress my thoughts. When I heard that her engagement with House Song was canceled, I specially came here to propose marriage."

After these emotional words were said, Old Madam wasn't the only one shocked. Behind the filigree divider screen decorated with carved spirals, Wei Luo was also shocked.

Who was Zhao Jie talking about? Why didn't she recognize this person?

She, Wei Ya, and Wei Dong were sitting on elm wood chairs. They could clearly hear everything outside. Originally, she had just wanted to hear how he would propose marriage. She hadn't expected to hear this type of words.

Faced with the glances that Wei Ya and Wei Dong threw at her, she pursed her lips and looked rather shameful. While she felt that the situation was rather laughable, there was a growing taste of sweetness in her heart.

Zhao Jie really could say nonsense with his eyes wide open.... What did he mean by not daring to act rashly? Before her engagement with Song Hui was canceled, the times that he acted rashly weren't few.

He said she was a little liar. Then, he was definitely a big liar. A big liar that acted outwardly saintly.

Wei Luo held her cheeks. Her dark, slippery eyes looked left and right. Her pink lips slightly curved up. Her little face looked slightly embarrassed. She wanted to rebuke him, but she also felt happy.

Wei Ya didn't say anything.

Wei Dong was very honest in her admiration and envy. "Then, this means that Ah Luo will marry into Prince Jing's residence. We should call you Princess Consort Jing..."

## Chapter 101.2

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Outside the divider screen, Old Madam was very touched by Zhao Jie's words. She hadn't expected that Prince Jing had been suffering for so many years because of Ah Luo. If Ah Luo's engagement with Song Hui hadn't been canceled, what would he have done? Would he continue to wait?

Thinking of this, she felt that he was rather pitiful.

The other madams were even more surprised. They hadn't expected that Prince Jing, who was feared by everyone in the capital, had such deep love towards Wei Luo...

Old Madam's heart softened. Originally, she had felt somewhat fearful towards Zhao Jie. Now, most of the fear was gone. It seemed that Zhao Jie's feelings for Wei Luo were sincere and true. She had been worried that he wanted to use Wei Luo to strengthen his relationship with Duke Ying's family. Old Madam's tone relaxed as she amicably said, "This old lady will first thank your Highness for coming here for Ah Luo. But, Duke Ying and Ah Luo's father are both not here. This is about Ah Luo's most important life event. I have to discuss this matter with them first..."

Zhao Jie put down the teacup and nodded to indicate that he understood.

Originally, before he had come here, he hadn't expected to succeed on this first visit. Now that Old Madam had said those words, he knew what to do. He stood up and said, "Since it's like that, then I'll have to ask Old Madam and Duke Ying to discuss this matter. This prince will come back here in a few days."

Old Madam let out a sigh in relief, "Thank you your Highness for understanding."

Zhao Jie didn't stay for long. After finishing his cup of tea, he bid farewell.

Old Madam personally sent him to the entrance.

At Duke Ying's residence's entrance, Zhao Jie turned around and mounted a horse. He tightened his grip on the reins and slowly rode the fine horse away. His heart wasn't disappointed. It wouldn't be good for him to succeed on his first visit. It wouldn't show off Wei Luo's preciousness. He regarded her as treasure and was naturally willing to visit her home several times for her. If he didn't succeed the first time, there was still the second and third time. Anyways, sooner or later, she would be his. No one else would be able to steal her away.

-----

Later that day, Duke Ying and Wei Kun returned in the evening.

Old Madam told them what had happened during the day. The two people were utterly surprised.

However, Wei Chang Hong, who had also returned with the two people, was very calm. He sat there without any change in his expression. His emotions were hidden and he didn't say any words.

Wei Kun walked back and forth. He was both overwhelmed by favor from his superior and also anxious. It took him a long time to finally say a complete sentence. "Prince Jing wants to marry Ah Luo. Could it be for Duke Ying's family?"

He had the same thoughts as Old Madam. He was also worried that Zhao Jie was marrying Wei Luo to use her. If this was true, then Wei Luo definitely couldn't marry him. How could she be happy if she was married to man that wanted to use her to grab more power?

Old Madam shook her head, "I don't think..." Then, she repeated the words that Zhao Jie had said in the receiving room. In the end, she lamented, "I didn't expect that Prince Jing could become infatuated."

Wei Chang Hong clenched his hand around the armrest.

Hearing her words, Wei Kun's worries were alleviated, but he still didn't want to agree to this marriage. He wanted Ah Luo to marry a family that had an equal status with theirs. In the future, she would support her husband and educate her children. The rest of her life would be peaceful and happy. But now that Prince Jing was interested in her, it was impossible for her life to be peaceful. He won't mention the future for now. The current situation wasn't hopeful either. Zhao Jie's relationship with Fifth Prince Zhao Zhang was like fire and water. No matter who became the emperor, the rest of Ah Luo's life wouldn't be dull.

Wei Kun felt both joyful and sorrowful. Sitting down in a chair, he couldn't make a decision for a long time.

However, even if he didn't make a decision, what will happen, will still happen.

-----

Seven days later, Zhao Jie came to Duke Ying's residence again.

This time, he didn't come here by himself.

A woman followed him down the carriage. She was wearing a moon white cloak embroidered with silver thread. A veil hid her face. But from her body's appearance, she was a woman with a very noble temperament.

Last time, Zhao Jie had been in a hurry when he came here, so he didn't bring anything here. This time, he had especially prepared nourishing herbs and several kinds of antiques to give to Duke Ying and Old Madam.

When Duke Ying took the items and led him inside the residence, his line of sight landed on the woman behind Zhao Jie. Puzzled, he tried to figure out her identity, "This is..."

The woman stopped walking. As she slowly took her off her veil, a beautiful and noble face was slowly revealed. First, it was her straight eyebrows, then her beautiful eyes were seen.

Empress Chen faintly smiled. She deliberately asked, "Duke Ying, you don't even recognize this empress?"

Greatly shocked, Duke Ying hurriedly led everyone to kneel. As he bent his head to salute, he said, "Greetings Your Majesty."

# Chapter 102.1

---

Empress Chen didn't tell Emperor Chong Zhen before she left the palace.

Since she had found out that Zhao Jie didn't succeed when he came here to propose last time, she kept thinking about this matter and planned to personally come here. Today, she finally had the opportunity to leave the palace while dressed in ordinary clothing and come with Zhao Jie to visit Duke Ying's residence.

Everyone was overwhelmed that the Empress had personally come to this residence. While the servants girls and the other servants had their heads lowered, they would quietly look up to carefully observe Empress Chen. Their eyes were full of reverence.

Duke Ying's expression was solemn. He could vaguely guess the reason why Empress Chen had come here. If her visit were for Wei Luo and Zhao Jie's marriage, then he would be forced to agree even if he didn't want to agree.

Empress Chen raised her hand to indicate that everyone could stand up. She smiled and asked, "Duke Ying, you didn't leave your residence today? I heard that last time you weren't home."

Duke Ying was usually neither servile nor overbearing in front of other people. Even when facing the Emperor, he still dared to speak his mind. Now that the Empress was deliberately making fun of him, his reaction could be considered unperturbed. He cupped hand in obeisance as he said, "Last time, this subject didn't know that His Highness Prince Jing would be visiting. I was visiting a colleague's home. When I came back, His Highness had already left. If his reception wasn't satisfactory, I hope that Your Majesty and His Highness will generously forgive me."

Empress Chen felt that his methodical reply was really boring. Fortunately, the reason that she came here today wasn't to see him. It was for something much more important. She looked

around and didn't see Wei Luo, so she said, "This empress left the palace at Liuli's request to see Fourth Miss Wei Luo. Where is she right now?"

She said it was because of Zhao Liuli's request, but Duke Ying was aware of her actual reason. With Prince Jing right behind her, her intention couldn't be more obvious.

For her to personally visit this place to see Wei Luo, it was clear that Empress Chen placed a high importance on Wei Luo. Duke Ying wasn't the only one surprised. Everyone else's shock also wasn't small. It could even be said that some people were envious, but happy and there were also people that were jealous.

Duke Ying straightforwardly said, "My granddaughter, Ah Luo, is probably in Pine Courtyard. If Your Majesty wants to see her, this subject will have people call her over here."

Hearing his words, Empress Chen seemed to be considering something.

Duke Ying thought she was going to drop the subject. Unexpectedly, she suddenly said, "No need. This empress will go over there to look for her."

Duke Ying's old face froze. His expression wasn't bad, but it wasn't good either. Fortunately, this only lasted for a moment. His expression quickly returned to normal. After he thought it through that it was fine if the empress wanted to see his granddaughter, he properly walked to the front to lead the way and said, "Your Majesty, please follow this old subject."

And so, the group of people changed directions and walked towards Pine Courtyard.

Zhao Jie was wearing a sapphire blue robe with a persimmon stem pattern. His tall body was like a pine tree to begin with. But wearing this robe, he seemed even more heroic and his bearing was extraordinary.



Duke Ying led Empress Chen to Pine Courtyard. It was inappropriate for the other madams to follow inside, so they could only curb their curiosity and watch as the Empress entered Song Courtyard. They didn't leave until Empress Chen entered Pine Courtyard. Among the madams, Third Madam Liu-shi's expression was the most interesting. She was in low spirits from envy and jealousy. All sorts of complicated wrong expressions appeared on her face. It made people's eyes feel confused. Other than her, First Madam, Second Madam, and Fourth Madam were all sincerely happy for Wei Luo.

Fourth Madam Qin-shi was especially happy. Since Wei Luo's engagement with Count Zhong Yi's family was canceled, she had been worrying about Wei Luo's marriage. When she talked about marriage with Wei Luo and Wei Luo hadn't seemed enthusiastic, she felt even more anxious. But, now everything was good. Prince Jing wanted to marry Wei Luo. There was no longer anything for her to worry about. She couldn't be any happier for Wei Luo.

Prince Jing's future wife would be from Duke Ying's family. It really was an extremely happy event.

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Duke Ying, Wei Kun, Empress Chen, and Zhao Jie entered a room. Jin Lu was currently wiping a glazed white vase that had a red hornless dragon. The vase was on a long narrow table. When Jin Lu turned her head, she was so scared that she jumped. She hurriedly put down the towel and saluted, "Greeting Your Majesty. May you have never-ending peace."

Jin Lu had followed Wei Luo into the palace several times. During these visits, she had the fortune to see Empress Chen a few times, so she immediately recognized her.

Empress Chen gestured for her to stand, then she looked around the room and asked, "Where's Ah Luo?"

Jin Lu replied, "To respond to Your Majesty, Miss is currently

resting in her room."

Duke Ying invited Empress Chen and Zhao Jie to sit down in the highest seats and ordered Jin Lu, "Go and bring Ah Luo here."

Jin Lu nodded. Just as Jin Lu was about to leave to bring Wei Luo here, Empress Chen had a sudden thought and said, "Wait. Ah Luo is a girl. It's not good for her to appear in front of other people. This empress will come with you instead. Besides, I just want to say a few words with her. It won't take too long."

Jin Lu became even more nervous. She instinctively looked towards Duke Ying. Seeing that Duke Ying didn't react and seem to be tacitly agreeing, she could only bow and say, "Your Highness, please follow this servant."

After they arrived in front of Wei Luo's room, Jin Lu pushed open the door and entered the room. Behind the divider screen that was made of twelve red sandalwood pieces and decorated with joyful magpies, there was a small figure partially lying down. Behind her back, her dark, thick, and long hair seemed like silky and lustrous flowing seaweed. A few strands of her hair slipped down to her cheeks and blocked her soft, cherry lips. She didn't seem to peacefully sleeping. Her long eyelashes were trembling. But, she hadn't woken up yet.

Wei Luo had taken a bath in the morning. Before her hair had dried, she had started to write. She fell asleep while writing.

On the qiao tou an table, there were tools for writing: ink, brush, writing paper, and blotting paper. There was a piece of paper below Wei Luo's hand. Empress Chen walked forward to look. These words were the start of "Fa Yan Yi Shu". Empress Chen couldn't help being surprised. Most girls didn't read this type of book and only studied the Four Books and Five Classics. She hadn't expected that Wei Luo would also study philosophy. It really made her have a whole new level of respect for Wei Luo.

Seeing that Wei Luo wasn't waking up, Jin Lu felt anxious and

called out, "Miss."

Wei Luo started to slowly open her eyes and sit up. Her long hair flowed down from her shoulders and made her small, white face seem even more delicate. She lowered her head, rubbed her eyes, and murmured, "En. What happened... " Just after she said these words, she looked up and saw Empress Chen. She froze for a moment, then she said, "Your Majesty?"

Empress Chen faintly smiled without saying a word.

Her surprise wasn't small. Why was Her Majesty in her room? She didn't have time to think. She hurriedly stood up and saluted. "This subject greets Your Majesty."

Empress Chen helped her up and joked, "Why are you taking a nap so early in the day? Did you not sleep well last night?"

## Chapter 102.2

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Wei Luo was very embarrassed. When she had copied half of the homework that was assigned by Mister Xue, she fell asleep. If other people heard this, they would laugh at her. "The content of this book is too complicated... It was too difficult to read. I was originally planning on taking a break and resting for a while. I didn't expect to fall asleep. Your Majesty, you must find me laughable."

(T/N: Just to be clear, Wei Luo's homework is copying that book as a way to memorize it. She's not copying someone else's answers.)

Empress Chen didn't mind. Conversely, she felt that Wei Luo was very hard working and studious. "As a girl, it must be hard for you to study this... Not just you, even I'm not willing to study this type of book. Only Chang Sheng liked to read this type of books as a child."

Until now, Wei Luo felt the name "Chang Sheng" was very strange. It took her a while to remember that this was Zhao Jie's childhood name. She slightly stagnated before asking, "Your Majesty, is there a reason why you came to my home?"

Empress Chen faintly smiled and said, "This empress has something I want to discuss with your father."

Wei Luo, "..."

As for what Empress Chen wanted to discuss, Wei Luo didn't even have to guess to know. Zhao Liuli and Zhao Jie were the people that Empress Chen cared about the most. These were the only two people that she would leave the palace for. Recently, Zhao Liuli was very content and there were no troubles in her life. Then the only possibility was... Zhao Jie.

Wei Luo gathered the hair around her shoulders and blushed as

she said, "Empress Chen, could you wait for a bit... I'll talk with you after I finish combing my hair."

Empress Chen sat down on a couch. While looking at her, she smiled and said, "Go ahead with freshening yourself up. This empress will leave in a moment."

After the words had been said to this point, Wei Luo couldn't force the empress to leave. She could only sit in front of a mirror with a grape pattern and have Jin Lu brush her hair. Jin Lu picked up a fine-toothed comb and prepared to arrange Wei Luo's hair into a yuanbao hairstyle.

Wei Luo couldn't just ignore Her Majesty while she sat over there. Just as Wei Luo was preparing to think of something to say, Empress Chen went straight to the point and asked, "Ah Luo, what do you think of Chang Sheng?"

Wei Luo looked at the girl that was blushing in the mirror. After considering for a moment, she properly replied, "Prince Jing is calm, mature, and meticulous. He's a good prince that rarely exists."

After Wei Luo said these words, the person behind her didn't respond for a while.

Did she say the wrong words?

Wei Luo couldn't help turning her head to look. Empress Chen looked like she was trying to stop herself from laughing. Slightly embarrassed and not understanding, Wei Luo asked, "Your Majesty, did I say something wrong?"

Empress Chen smiled. "You haven't. Your words were very good."

In the eyes of other, Zhao Jie was a ruthless, tyrannical, and vicious prince. Even Zhao Liuli was slightly scared of him. However, this little girl had described him as "calm, mature, and meticulous". Unless there was something wrong with Wei Luo's eyes, then her son must really like this girl. In front of her, he

must be a completely different person than when he was in front of other people.

Not much time later, Jin Lu finished arranging Wei Luo's hair into a yuanbao hairstyle. She also inserted a golden hairpin with tourmaline into her hair. Wei Luo stood up and prepared to walk outside with Empress Chen, but Empress Chen said, "You can stay here. You don't have to go to the central room. This empress will be leaving right after I say something to your father."

Wei Luo thought for a moment. Since Empress Chen had come here, Zhao Jie must have also come. It wouldn't be good for her to come out right now, so she didn't insist on going. After walking with Empress Chen to the door, she watched her leave.

-----

Inside the Pine Courtyard's central room, Empress Chen didn't speak in a roundabout way. She straightforwardly said to Duke Ying and Wei Kun, "This empress came here today for Jie-er and Ah Luo's marriage."

Duke Ying had already prepared himself, so at this moment, he could still be considered calm.

However, Wei Kun's heart stiffened. His grip on the white glazed teacup tightened.

Empress Chen continued, "If Duke Ying doesn't have an opinion, this empress will tell the emperor tomorrow and ask him to bestow a marriage for Jie-er and Ah Luo."

Duke Ying didn't say anything. Wei Kun hesitated for a moment and couldn't resist saying, "Ah Luo is young. She's also mischievous and stubborn. If she marries His Highness, I'm afraid that she'll trouble His Highness..."

Sitting below Empress Chen, Zhao Jie declared his position towards this issue, "After Ah Luo marries this prince, she'll be the Princess Consort Jing. It would only be right and proper for this

prince to take care of her. How would she be considered troublesome?"

He hadn't even married her yet and he was already speaking if she belonged to him.

But, his reply was sincere. It dispelled all of the misgivings in Wei Kun's heart. Previously, Zhao Jie was an aloof, remote, solemn, and imposing person. For him to suddenly become his son-in-law, he couldn't easily accept this change. He didn't even know what type of attitude he should have when facing Zhao Jie.

He wasn't the only person. Duke Ying felt the same way.

During the previous times that Zhao Jie had come to Duke Ying's residence, his behavior had been proper and he had rarely seen Ah Luo, much less talked to her. When was it that he became interested in Ah Luo? Why weren't there any signs?

Although they felt doubtful, the situation had already reached this point. The empress had even personally come here. If they continued to refuse, then they couldn't tell good actions from bad ones.

Zhao Jie saw that their faces had softened. He stood up, cupped one hand in the other, and said, "Please agree to let Ah Luo marry this prince."

Wei Kun hesitated for a moment. In the end, he nodded and said, "It's only that Ah Luo hasn't had her hairpin ceremony yet. My father and I are both reluctant for Ah Luo to marry so young. Let's wait one more year. After her hairpin ceremony..."

Zhao Jie felt that this request was very reasonable. He smiled and said, "This is only right. This prince is willing to wait until after her hairpin ceremony to marry her."

Wei Kun sighed in relief. He could be considered relieved.

After matters related to the marriage was carefully discussed, Duke Ying wanted to properly entertain Empress Chen and Prince

Jing. After he asked the two of them to stay for lunch, Empress Chen politely refuse, "This empress can't stay out for long, so I won't continue to disturb you. Duke Ying, enjoy your lunch with your family."

Duke Ying could only drop the subject. He and his family walked Empress Chen and Zhao Jie to the entrance to send them off. Everyone felt as if they had woken up from a dream after Empress Chen's imperial carriage with a green cover majestically left. They felt as if today didn't seem real.

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Before three days had passed, Emperor Chong Zhen's imperial edict came.

Duke Ying led everyone in the residence to kneel in the courtyard to receive the imperial edict.

Wearing a black hat outlined in gold and a bright red robe with peony flowers, the eunuch read out loud, "... to bestow Prince Jing a wife. The wedding will happen next year in September."

Duke Ying brushed off the dust on his sleeves, walked forward, and said, "This subject accepts."

Having reached this point, Wei Luo and Zhao Jie's marriage was finally settled.

Very soon, Duke Ying's residence would have a princess consort!

After sending the palace people away, the people from first branch, second branch, and fourth branch went forward to congratulate Wei Kun and Wei Luo.

Although Third Madam's heart felt sour, when she thought about how Wei Luo would be the Princess Consort Jing in the future, she forced herself to smile. She pretended to congratulate her, "Ah Luo is truly a person that's blessed with good fortune."

Wei Luo was standing behind Wei Kun. Her hands were holding



the imperial edict and she didn't care about Third Madam's words at all. She thought about Zhao Jie's previously anxious appearance and couldn't help smiling. He had finally achieved what he wished for. She was going to marry him. She wondered how happy he was feeling right now.

# Chapter 103.1

---

Since Wei Luo became engaged, there were changes to her life.

For example, girls that usually weren't close to her became friendly with her recently. For example, the number of people visiting Duke Ying's residence increased. For example, other people's attitude towards her became more respectful... Ultimately, all of this was because she was going to marry Prince Jing Zhao Jie.

However, these changes didn't have a great affect on her. She still lived the same way as she used to live in the past. She wouldn't change because other people had changed.

If she had to say who had changed the most, then it would probably be Fourth Madam Qin-shi and her younger brother, Chang Hong.

Wei Luo wouldn't be married until next year's late September, but Qin-shi had already started to prepare the clothes, pillows, and bedding that she would bring to her husband's house after marriage. Everyday, Qin-shi would send people over to ask Wei Luo what type of design and color she liked. Qin-shi even had people measure her for her wedding dress... Even Old Madam felt that Qin-shi was preparing too early. However, Qin-shi didn't feel this way at all. Originally, these were things that a mother would do. But, Wei Luo didn't have a mother. Fourth Madam cared for Wei Luo as if she was her biological daughter. She did whatever she could for Wei Luo. Instead of feeling this was laborious, Qin-shi enjoyed doing these preparations.

In her heart, Wei Luo felt grateful towards fourth aunt.

As for Chang Hong...

Wei Luo held her cheeks and deeply sighed. Chang Hong watched her more and more closely. If someone from the palace invited her,

he would undoubtedly stop her until he clearly investigated who the other person was. If he found out that Zhao Jie wanted to see her, then he definitely wouldn't let her leave the residence.

Today, a carriage had come from the palace. They said Princess Tianji was inviting Wei Luo to the palace. The carriage had already waited outside Duke Ying's residence for almost an hour. Wei Luo sat in front a bronze mirror. She had already finished dressing herself and was wearing a moon white top with a rose pattern and a crimson skirt with an eight-treasure pattern and pearl beading. Just as she walked past the divider screen, she saw Chang Hong. He was wearing an indigo robe with a cloud pattern.

Chang Hong was standing perfectly straight outside the door. He appeared to have already waited for a long time. He didn't seem surprise when she came out.

Wei Luo instinctively retreated and opened her red lips to say, "Chang Hong..."

How did he know that she was going outside? Including this time, he had already blocked and intercepted her three times!

Ah Luo quickly adjusted her expression and straightforwardly asked, "Why haven't you gone over Mister Xue's? You don't have class today?"

Chang Hong wasn't the same as her. He had to go Mister Xue's for class every day since he was twelve years old. Since she was a girl and wasn't taking the imperial examination, Mister Qi and Wei Kun felt that she didn't need to learn so much profound and difficult to understand knowledge. So, she only needed to occasionally go to class and finish Mister Qi's assignments. At this time of the day, Chang Hong would usually be attending class in Mister Qi's study and wouldn't have the free time to appear here.

Chang Hong looked at her and answered her question with another question, "Where are you going?"

He seemed prepared and wasn't distracted by her change in topic. Wei Luo silently cursed in her mind. But on the surface, she brightly smiled to show her dimples and said, "Liuli invited to me to the palace. I was just about to go."

Chang Hong didn't move and the expression on his face didn't change. He didn't seem to believe her. "Is it really Princess Tianji?"

Wei Luo nodded, "Really."

He didn't say anything and only looked at her without moving. His gaze made her feel guiltier. It was too simple for his clever mind to discover clues. After considering, he asked, "If Princess Tianji invited you, why didn't Mama Qiu come as the messenger?"

When Zhao Liuli invited her to the palace, Mama Qiu would always act as the messenger. This time, instead of Mama Qiu, it was an unknown imperial bodyguard. Everyone knew that Liuli only had one imperial bodyguard, Yang Zhen. The other imperial bodyguards didn't have the qualifications to be the princess's personal guard.

Normally, other people wouldn't pay any attention to these details. However, if they really wanted to investigate this, there were many inconsistencies. So, someone like Chang Hong, who was completely vigilant against Zhao Jie, would of course notice this.

Wei Luo was left speechless by his question. She stood in place and impatiently looked at him.

In the end, Chang Hong's heart still softened. He could never maintain a stern face in front of her. Seeing her pitiful face, he couldn't help softening his tone as he said, "Ah Luo. Don't go."

Wei Luo's round eyes glistened with water. She seemed like an innocent baby deer. In a soft and weak tone, she said, "But I miss him..."

Of course, she knew that the person picking her up was Zhao Jie

and not Zhao Liuli.

Logically, as an unmarried girl from a noble family, she should be more reserved and shouldn't agree to see him. But, she also missed Zhao Jie. She hadn't seen him for over half a month since they were engaged. Even if they only talked without doing anything, it would still be good. She liked him and wanted to be at his side at all times. Unfortunately, she couldn't say these words to Chang Hong. If she said these words, he would immediately become angry. So, Wei Luo could only think about this in her heart.

Chang Hong looked at her and somewhat helplessly said, "You promised me that you wouldn't see him until your wedding day."

Wei Luo thought for a moment. He really had said these words on Marquis An Lin's birthday. Although she didn't refuse at the time, she also didn't agree.

He controlled his emotions and seriously warned her, "I heard from other people that girls should protect themselves before their marriage and shouldn't let themselves be taken advantage by men. This way he'll treasure you more in the future after you're married."

Wei Luo couldn't believe that he would actually earnestly say these words. Surprised, she opened her eyes wider.

However, she had to admit there was logic to his words. Fourth aunt had also said the same type of words to her. Wei Luo was slightly persuaded by his words.

Beside, if they couldn't meet, Zhao Jie was definitely more anxious than her... She could see it from how he tried to use Liuli's name to see her three days in a row. Never mind. Just be anxious. She couldn't forcefully break out to leave. That would not only hurt Chang Hong's feelings, it would also sound bad if other people found out.

After Wei Luo thought about these consequences, she decided to

comply with Chang Hong's wishes. She called the servant girl that had brought the message over and said, "Go outside and tell them that I'm not feeling comfortable today, so I can't go to the palace to see Princess Tianji. I'll go to the palace to see her when I'm feeling better on another day."

The servant girl acknowledged her words, turned around, and left Pine Courtyard.

Wei Luo tilted her head to look at Wei Chang Hong. She pursed her lips and smiled, "Are you happy now?"

Wei Chang Hong looked at her and lightly nodded.

## Chapter 103.2

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Very quickly, it was August 15th. Today was Mid-Autumn Festival.

Duke Ying's family held their feast in Su Ye, which was a building at the center of a lake at the back of their residence. It was currently late autumn. There were fragmented leaves floating on the surface of the lake. The green leaves had turned into autumn colors and dried out. The unusually bright, full moon was hanging in the sky. The moonlight scattered over the lake and made the flowing water silvery white.

Since Su Yu was built at the center of the lake, if they wanted to go there, they had take boats. Under the evening sky, Wei Luo was wearing a crimson muslin jacket, a gauzy white skirt, and a cherry blossom pink outer robe embroidered with auspicious clouds. Holding Jin Lu's hand, she boarded a boat.

Third Miss Wei Ya was on the same boat as Wei Luo. Wei Ya had also brought a servant girl. The weight was just right with the four of them plus a female servant to row the boat.

After Wei Luo was engaged, Wei Ya was the remaining unmarried girl in their family. Third Madam's parents' family's conditions weren't good and her own demand was high. She was very picky with selecting her son-in-law. If someone's family background were slightly inferior, she would look down on him. The families with very good backgrounds weren't interested in Wei Ya. This was why Wei Ya hadn't been engaged yet. Third Madam couldn't accept a lower position, but she couldn't reach a higher one either.

The small boat slowly coasted. The female servant was rowing at the bow of the boat. Wei Luo and Wei Ya greeted each other when they boarded the boat, but didn't say another word since then.

The small boat quickly arrived at Su Ye and stopped at the edge

of the pavilion. Wei Luo lifted her skirt to walk forward and decided to go upstairs. Wei Ya suddenly called out, "Younger sister Ah Luo."

She stopped, turned her head, and asked, "Is something wrong, third older sister?"

Wei Ya stood on the small boat and hesitantly asked, "I just wanted to ask you how did you meet Prince Jing? Why did he come to our home to propose marriage..."

Wei Luo tilted her head, blinked, and didn't reply.

Wei Ya felt sheepish after being looked at by Wei Luo. She also felt that her question was too excessive. Just as she was about to say that Wei Luo didn't have to reply, she heard Wei Luo say, "I was Princess Tianji's study companion when I was six years old. I met Prince Jing then. Later, when I was visiting Princess Tianji in the palace, I would occasionally see him. As for why he would come to propose marriage... How about I ask older brother Prince Jing for you?"

Wei Ya felt ashamed after hearing Wei Luo's response. Originally, she had just been curious. Wei Luo's words made it seem like she was meddling in another person's business. She quickly shook her head to indicate no. Then, she continued, "I haven't congratulated younger sister Ah Luo yet. In the future, you'll be Princess Consort Jing."

Wei Luo faintly smiled, "Thank you third older sister." Then, she immediately started walking up the stairs and didn't say any additional words.

Wei Ya's face showed her uneasy.

She didn't know what was wrong with her. Why did she blurted out the question in her heart... Perhaps, she was unconvinced. Why was Wei Luo's life so good? Why did everything good happen to her? Getting engaged was already difficult enough for her, but



Wei Luo had effortlessly gotten engaged to Prince Jing.

Wei Luo's recent words had enlightened her with perfect understanding.

It wasn't that Wei Luo's life was good. It was only that everyone's fate was different. When Wei Luo was six years old, she had been Princess Tianji's study companion while she had stayed at home and acted spoiled in front of her mother. This was why Wei Luo could become acquainted with Prince Jing Zhao Jie while she was an ordinary Third Miss that didn't leave the residence and had little contact with outside people.

Wei Ya had to admit that she really couldn't be compared to Wei Luo.

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Su Yue's second floor was already full of people. Duke Ying and Old Madam sat in the top seats. The other branches sat on the other sides. In the center, there was a yellow rosewood table that was twenty to thirty feet long and carved with lions. There were many people in Duke Ying's family, so the table was completely packed. The men and women didn't seat separately. The scene was very lively.

The table was full of vegetable and meat dishes and fruits. Duke Ying picked up the first bite of food before everyone else picked up his or her chopsticks.

The family enjoyed themselves to the fullest eating dinner.

After dinner, Duke Yin led everyone to the pavilion to worship the moon.

Standing at the edge of the crowd, Wei Luo held three sticks of incense and bowed to the moon three times in worship before going up to insert the incense into the incense burner. After this, the entire family sat down together to drink tea and enjoyed the beauty of the moon. It was boring just to drink tea, so Duke Ying

suggested that everyone would compose a poem with the moon as the subject. Whoever composed the best poem would be rewarded. This would both liven up the mood and test his grandchildren on their homework.

Wei Luo wasn't feeling well. She sent Bai Lan to inform Duke Ying that she would be leaving in advance.

Sitting next to her and concerned, Fourth Madam Qin-shi asked her what was wrong. Ashamed, she whispered into Qin-shi's ear, "Fourth aunt, my stomach hurts."

Qin-shi suddenly realized. Everyone understood that this type of female thing was always very embarrassing and couldn't be avoid. Qin-shi also said she would find someone to bring her back, but Wei Luo didn't want to bother Qin-shi, so she thoughtfully refused.

Wei Luo led Bai Lan to a boat that would take them back. Her period had started today. She hadn't noticed until her stomach started to hurt after she ate a few oranges on the dining table.

After reaching shore, the roadside was dark. There was only the bright moon hanging in the sky. The scattered bright moonlight illuminated parts of the road to look like sparkling crystals. On both sides of the path, the trees were silent except for occasionally rustling when the night wind passed by. Wei Lui held her outer robe closer as she slowly walked.

Bai Lan worriedly asked, "Miss, do you feel better? Does it hurt a lot?"

Wei Luo lightly whimpered. Her small face turned white. Before, there were only bursts of minor pain, but the current sensation was terribly painful.

She wanted to go back to her room. Perhaps, she would feel better after lying down in bed and holding a hot water bottle. However, something seemed wrong after she had walked for a while. It felt as if someone was following her. She stopped and

looked behind her. There wasn't anything behind her other than the trees and the moonlight.

Perhaps, it was her misperception?

She continued to walk forward. She still had that feeling after walking for a bit.

She thought Chang Hong was worried about her and followed her over here to see her. So, she said, "I'm fine. I'll feel better after I go back and rest. You don't have to go with me."

She waited for a long time, but there wasn't any movement behind her.

Baffled, she turned her head. When she turned around, she suddenly saw a tall figure standing in front of her. Shocked, she instinctively retreated. However, she accidentally stepped on a stone. Her body started to fall backwards.

The person in front of her swiftly caught her. His long arms wrapped around her soft waist.

A familiar scent blew by. Wei Luo couldn't see the other person's face, but she could recognize his voice.

She heard a deep, slow, magnetic, and sweet-sounding voice ask, "Ah Luo, why won't you see me?"

## Chapter 104.1

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A wide, hard chest blocked Wei Luo's front view. She tightly held the front of his robe. Using the light from the moon, she looked up and saw his face, "Older brother Prince Jing?"

Zhao Jie was wearing a dark blue brocade robe. It wasn't strange that Wei Luo didn't see him before. His clothes weren't very conspicuous. Since Bai Lan was here and they were still in view of the glimmering Su Ye, he let her go after steadying her and said, "It's me."

It really was him. Wei Luo opened her eyes wider in surprise.

They were some distance away from Su Ye. Plus, the willow trees sheltered them, so it wouldn't be easy for the people across the lake to see the scene here. Even so, Wei Luo still had a guilty conscience. Although they were engaged and she would marry him in another year to become his wife, they still shouldn't be privately meeting late at night! If other people saw, they would probably laugh at them.

Wei Luo instinctively pushed him away, retreated two steps, raised her beautifully made up face, and asked, "Why are you here? Do you sneak in here? Big brother, hurry and go back. It won't be good if someone sees."

Zhao Jie had just come here. He hadn't even said two sentences before she wanted to drive him away. He felt helpless as if a blow had struck him. He took her hand and pulled her towards the end of the path. "Come with me."

His hand was warm and forceful as he clutched her hand. Wei Luo struggled for a moment, but she wasn't able to break free from him. She could only blindly follow him forward.

As a result, Bai Lan became anxious. Where was His Highness Prince Jing planning on taking Miss? It was already so late.

Regardless of where they went, it wasn't appropriate! She wanted to call out, "Miss!" But, she was worried that if she were too loud, other people in the residence would hear her. Because she didn't want to harm Wei Luo and Zhao Jie's reputations and not knowing what she should do, she could only catch up to them. She lowered her voice and asked, "Your Highness, where are you taking my family's Miss?"

Zhao Jie stopped, turned around, and said to Bai Lan, "You don't have to follow. This prince will bring Ah Luo safely back to the residence in two hours."

Bai Lan hesitated. She very much didn't feel safe letting Wei Luo be alone with Zhao Jie. In the dead of the night, her Miss wouldn't even have room to resist if he wanted to do something... A girl's reputation was so important. Even if they were engaged, they weren't married yet and had to comply with the strict rule of maintaining distance between men and women. "Miss..."

Seeing that Bai Lan was in difficult position and thinking about Chang Hong and fourth aunt's words, Wei Luo momentarily hesitated. She thought for a moment, then she said to Zhao Jie, "Older brother Prince Jing, promise that you just want to say a few words, then I'll go with you."

Seeing the uneasiness in the little girl's eyes, Zhao Jie knew that his excessively reckless behavior today had scared her. He hadn't seen her in a long time and just wanted to talk to her. And so, he nodded and said, "Okay, this prince just wants to talk to you."

Wei Luo didn't let go of her worries until she received his promise. She turned her head and said to Bai Lan, "Go back while no one is watching. If daddy or Chang Hong asks, say that I'm not feeling well, so I went to sleep early."

In the end, Bai Lan nodded.

Zhao Jie squeezed Wei Luo's palm and continued leading her to a corner gate.

On both sides of the path, there were verdant and lush osmanthus trees. The entire path was fragrant. He seemed very familiar with Duke Ying's residence. Even Wei Luo rarely walked this path, but he easily led them to the corner gate as if this was a familiar path to him. No one saw them. Just as Wei Luo was confused, she saw a black-robed bodyguard at the end of the path. It wasn't Zhu Geng. It was Yang Hao, someone she hadn't seen in a long time. Next to the opened corner gate, Yang Hao properly saluted after seeing Zhao Jie, "Your Highness."

Zhao Jie nodded and led Wei Luo through the gate.

In one smooth movement, Yang Hao turned around and locked the corner gate.

Wei Luo was really curious. Why were they so familiar with her home?

There was an imperial carriage parked outside of the gate. Zhao Jie had probably prepared this carriage in advance to bring her to somewhere else. Feeling anxious, she asked, "Where are you taking me?"

Zhao Jie held her small, soft waist with both of his hands and carried her into the carriage, then he immediately came into the carriage, lifted the window curtain, and said, "How about going to Wan Yuan?"

Wan Yuan was located in the center of the capital. It had beautiful architecture with curved eaves and a total of eight floors. It was a good place to view far away places. Normally, there were countless poets and literary people who went there to compose poetry. Today was Mid-autumn Festival. Wan Yuan would definitely be more lively than usual.

Wei Luo was slow in her response, but she still agreeably nodded.

## Chapter 104.2

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The carriage slowly went forward and left the corner gate.

As soon as Wei Luo sat down in the carriage, she toppled over onto a large pillow embroidered with golden and silver flowers to lie down, then she curled up and silently clutched her stomach.

It was only now that Zhao Jie saw that her small face was very pale. When they were in the courtyard, their surroundings were too dark and he couldn't see the expression on her face. He could only feel that her spirit was wan. Zhao Jie had thought she was only worried about being discovered by other people. But now, it seemed that it was something completely different. He brought her closer to him, placed her on his leg, and carefully held her small face as he asked, "Ah Luo, what's wrong? Are you not feeling well somewhere?"

Originally, Wei Luo didn't want to tell him. After all, it was an embarrassing thing that shouldn't be mentioned. But, she really couldn't resist. Her stomach ached terribly, especially after walking with him for a while. She felt as if she was going to fall down with every step she took. By the time they came into the carriage, she felt as if she had already fallen into an ice cellar. She buried her head into Zhao Jie's chest and in a low, muffled voice, she said, "Older brother Prince Jing, my stomach hurts so much."

Zhao Jie was startled for a moment, but he quickly understood her meaning.

He instinctively moved his gaze down to look at her body. Feeling helpless and sorry for her, he rubbed the red birthmark between her eyebrows and asked, "Why didn't you tell me earlier?"

Wei Luo closed her eyes and her two rows of thick eyelashes fluttered. In her mind she thought, I wouldn't have been able to come out if I told you. But instead of saying this, she used a fallacious argument to deceive him, "Would it stop hurting if I told

you?"

Zhao Jie didn't have a way to deal with her. It wouldn't be good for him to argue with her over this. He could only think of ways to make her feel more comfortable. He put her body down, so that her head was lying down on his leg. He probably knew something about this type of matter. And so, his hand went inside her clothing and his fingers stopped at top of her small stomach's round bellybutton.

Startled, Wei Luo moved back to avoid him, "What are you doing?"

He laughed. He felt that her alarmed expression was too cute. She looked like a scared baby squirrel. He explained, "Don't worry. I won't do anything since I already promised you. You'll feel better after I warm you up with my hand."

Wei Luo was skeptical. She darkly looked at him and said, "Your hand can't wander."

Wei Luo didn't relax her wariness until he nodded. There was a smile on his lips.

A moment later, it was as Zhao Jie had said. The warmth from his hand traveled to her stomach and alleviated her pain. Wei Luo moved his hand down. She forgot that the man next to her couldn't resist being provoked by her. "Warm this spot too."

Zhao Jie's body stiffened. He lowered his eyes and looked at the little girl on his leg. Her complexion had improved a lot from before. It wasn't pale anymore. She trusted him fully and didn't realize that her action was a huge trial for him. A long time later, Zhao Jie curved his lips and said, "Ah Luo." He didn't realize that his voice had become hoarse until he said her name.

Wei Luo quietly said, "En."

He said, "If you continue this, big brother will do more than just talk with you."



At first, Wei Luo was surprised. She quickly realized his meaning, blushed, took his hand out, sat up, and glanced at him.

He hoarsely laughed, then he smoothly straightened her messy clothes and asked, "Does your stomach feel better?"

Wei Luo nodded, "It doesn't hurt as much."

He stared at her and said, "If it hurts too much, then we won't go Wan Yuan. I'll bring your back to Duke Ying's residence. We can go another day."

Wei Luo blinked. She almost couldn't believe that he had said these words. They hadn't seen each other for a long time. She thought that he would really want to spend time with her.

Zhao Jie probably guessed what she was thinking. He lowered his head and touched her forehead. He slowly said, "Idiot. Although this prince want to see you, I'm more worried about your health."

Wei Luo was slightly moved. She stared at him. At lightening speed and without warning, she kissed his cheek. "Then, let's not go to Wan Yuan. I want to eat the lotus osmanthus pastries from Ye He. Could you buy me some before we go back?"

Zhao Jie touched his face. He felt the warmth that she had left behind. In this type of situation, he would naturally listen to whatever she wanted. And so, he smiled and said, "Okay."

Please read from the original source at [fuyuneko dot org](http://fuyuneko.org). It's very discouraging to see people reading stolen translations from aggregator sites after I spent hours translating.

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Zhao Jie ordered Yang Hao to change direction to head west to Yu He.

Not much time later, the carriage stopped in front of Yu He. Zhao Jie came down from the carriage. His figure gradually entered into the crowd. Wei Luo sat inside the carriage and waited.

Although the sun had already set, there were still many pedestrians on the street. The streets were brightly lit and were bustling with noise and excitement that seemed as if it would last until dawn. On the streets, there were stalls selling lanterns and moon cake everywhere. There were colorful lanterns hanging on both side of the streets and they illuminated half of the night sky. If Wei Luo left the carriage with Zhao Jie at this time, someone might see her and tell Duke Ying or Wei Kun.

So, it would be safer for her stay in the carriage.

Wei Luo lifted up the window curtain embroidered with golden thread, looked at Yu He, and couldn't help curving her lips.

Just as Wei Luo was about to put the curtain down, a person walked out of Ye He's entrance. The person walking in the front was a woman wearing a pink silk robe with a cloud pattern. Two servant girls wearing foreign clothing followed her. The woman wasn't walking quickly. Her head was turned aside to talk with the servant girls. The motley colorful lights from the surrounding lanterns shined on her face. Her face couldn't be clearly seen, but other people could still feel her charming and beautiful appearance.

The woman turned around and her line of sight intersected with Wei Luo's.

Wei Luo wasn't paying attention to other things. She only glanced at her before looking away.

But after that woman saw Wei Luo, her body suddenly froze.

Even after Wei Luo let go of the curtain, that woman still didn't move.

# Chapter 105

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Fifteen minutes later, Zhao Jie finished buying the lotus osmanthus pastry and came out of Yu He.

He walked back to the carriage, lifted the drape, stooped down to enter the carriage, and saw a small girl hugging a pillow embroidered with gold and silver thread. Her dark eyes were looking at him and her lips were faintly flat as if she was complaining that he had taken too long. Zhao Jie's heart unexpectedly softened. He placed the lotus osmanthus pastries wrapped in oilpaper on the small table, touched her small nose, and asked, "Do you feel better?"

Wei Luo's stomach still hurt, but it wasn't as bad as before. She looked at the small blue and white porcelain bowl that Zhao Jie had brought back and asked, "What's that?"

Zhao Jie sat down by her side, held up the small bowl, and said, "This is the jujube and dark brown sugar soup that I had the kitchen make. Come here. Drink it while it's still warm."

So, this was why he had taken so long. It was because he had the kitchen especially make this. The steam rising from the bowl showed that it had been made recently.

Wei Luo felt a bit surprised and also slightly moved. She couldn't help acting spoiled. "Big brother, feed me."

Like always, Zhao Jie couldn't refuse her request. Besides, he was happy to do this. He scooped a spoonful of soup and brought it to her lips, "Here."

Wei Luo held his hand and drank the soup down spoonful by spoonful. After she finished drinking, her stomach warmed up and she felt much better than before. She licked her lips and longing for more, she said, "Really sweet."

Her pink, soft tongue passed through his sight. Zhao Jie's dark

eyes deepened. He lowered his head, held her tongue in his mouth, gently bit it so that she couldn't take it back, and eagerly sucked on it. In the end, he said, "It really is very sweet."

Outside the carriage, in front of Ye He's entrance, the woman in the pink robe was still staring at the carriage's window curtain. Even though the curtain had already been put down and she couldn't see the scene inside, she still didn't walk away. If one were to carefully observe, it was easy to see that her body was faintly trembling and her eyes were gradually turning red.

Next to her, a servant girl with a high nose tried to wake up the woman from her daze by asking the woman in puzzlement, "Why did you stop walking?"

When the carriage had gradually moved far away, the woman returned to her senses. She looked down and calmed her emotions. She curved her lips into a smile and said, "Let's go."

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As the carriage started going back to Duke Ying's residence, it suddenly stopped when it was halfway there.

Outside the carriage, Yang Hao said, "Your Highness."

Sitting inside the carriage, Zhao Jie had just stolen a piece of lotus osmanthus pastry from Wei Luo's mouth. His current mood was very good. While using his thumb to gently wipe away the pastry crumbs, he asked, "What's wrong?"

Yang Hao replied, "There's too many people in front of us. The carriage temporarily can't pass them. This subordinate knows another path, but that road has potholes that would be hard to pass. This subordinate is worried that the ride will be bumpy for the prince and Fourth Miss. Would the prince and Fourth Miss like to come out of the carriage here? And, this subordinate will make a detour to the second street up ahead to pick the two of you up."

Wei Luo wasn't feeling well and truly shouldn't be jolted. Zhao

Jie considered for a moment before agreeing.

The two of them came out of the carriage to a residential street where people were coming and going. Yang Hao drove the carriage into a dark alley. The carriage quickly disappeared from their sights.

Wei Luo was worried about meeting acquaintances and insisted that Zhao Jie buy a veiled hat for her.

Zhao Jie didn't agree. He helplessly touched her head and said, "Ah Luo, what are you afraid of? Everyone in the capital knows that you're mine."

She didn't say anything for a moment. She actually couldn't refute this. In the end, she could only raise her head and refute by saying, "I'm not yours yet."

In the end, Zhao Jie complied with her request. He brought a veiled hat from the side of the street, placed the hat over her head, leaned over to help her tie the ribbons, and said, "You'll be mine, sooner or later."

After wearing the veiled hat, Wei Luo felt much more at ease and didn't worry that the nearby people would discover her. Her little hand went inside Zhao Jie's sleeve to hold his hand as she walked forward. "Let's go."

Seeing her little figure, he couldn't bear to tell her the truth.

Zhao Jie smiled and felt exhilarated just looking at her.

So, what if she was wearing a veiled hat? Who else in the capital would hold his hand? In the eyes of others, she was just making herself more conspicuous by trying to hide. But, if this was what she wanted, he didn't mind going along with her by pretending to be a pair of sneaky lovers.

Not far away from them, there were rows of lanterns hanging in the middle of the street. There were riddles underneath the lanterns. So, this was why Yang Hao said they wouldn't be able to

pass over here in a carriage. There was an impenetrable crowd of people guessing the riddles. Rings of three people deep surrounded the lanterns. It was difficult enough for people to pass through here, much less a carriage. Surrounded by a bustling crowd, Wei Luo could only hide in Zhao Jie's arms as much as possible. Zhao Jie's hand was placed on her back and safely guarding her so that the pedestrians wouldn't collide into her.

Despite this, mishaps would still happen.

Diagonally in front of them, there were several scholars standing in front of a lantern. Even after thinking about the riddle hanging below the lantern for a long time, they still didn't understand. Because people were pushing, the lantern broke away from a person's hand and was blown away by the wind. It coincidentally landed at Wei Luo's feet. Wei Luo almost stepped on the lantern. She hurriedly stopped walking and bent down to pick up the lantern.

She saw a piece of paper stuck to the lantern. The words "Royal Academy. A crowd of people lined up. Hu Xuan dance. Remnants of power foundation." were written on the paper.

(T/N: Royal Academy was an official school for music, dance, and theater in China between the Tang Dynasty and Ming Dynasty.)

She looked at the paper and said without thinking, "The Biographies of Exemplary Women."

A man wearing a loose robe with a wide belt came over. Just as he was about to speak, he stopped after hearing her words.

Behind him, one after another, the scholars suddenly realized. "Right, it is "The Biographies of Exemplary Women."

These scholars usually read Confucian classics and neglected reading the books that were read by women. This was why they weren't able to guess the riddle. Wei Luo was raised in the boudoir and was often told by Mister Xue to read this book. This was why

she was able to guess this answer without thinking too much. She looked up and was preparing to return the lantern. Seeing the man in front of her, she froze for a moment. She almost blurted out the words, "Older brother Song Hui."

Song Hui left his home today to socialize with his classmates. On their way home, they came here by chance. A few of his friends had a sudden impulse to stop here to guess the riddles. He stood on the side and watched. Occasionally, he would express his opinion by saying a few words. He didn't expect to meet her here... Even if her face was hidden, he could still recognize her. They had known each for so long. He remembered everything about her. He was perceptive to the sound of her voice and the sight of her figure... In addition, Zhao Jie was standing next to her. It wouldn't be possible for him to fail to recognize her.

While holding the lantern out, Wei Luo stopped moving her hand in mid-air. She didn't know if she should take her hand back or continue with giving him back the lantern.

Fortunately, Song Hui didn't embarrass her. He took the lantern, gently curved his lips, and quietly said, "Miss, thank you for clearing up the confusion."

# Chapter 106

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The scholars across from them didn't know what was happening here. Seeing that Song Hui wasn't moving, some of them even started joking, "Flower boy, are you still not coming back?"

Wei Luo took her hand back. She stammered out, "You're welcome."

After saying these words, she didn't say anything else.

Song Hui stared at her. There were a thousand words that he wanted to say. In the end, they only hovered in his lips and teeth before he swallowed them down. What could he say? Their relationship had been broken the day the engagement was canceled. In the future, whether there was sorrow or joy, it had nothing to do with the other person. Even if they met, it could only be like now. He could only say thank you and ask a token how are you. Nothing could be done.

She was already engaged with Zhao Jie. Several days ago, when the imperial edict was announced, there was uproar about this among the aristocratic families. Even if he didn't want to know, he couldn't avoid finding out about this news. Duke Ying's Fourth Miss was so fortunate. Count Zhong Yi's family canceled their engagement and she became the future honorable Princess Consort Jing. The canceled engagement had changed into a great topic to discuss. Without his sacrifice, how would she be able to be with Zhao Jie? When this was said in the mouth of others, this was a small matter that didn't hurt or itch. But, this was serious injury to him.

Originally, Song Hui thought he would be able to quickly get over this and no longer feel bad. He thought he would be able to feel calmer when facing Wei Luo in the future. But, he wasn't able to do this. It had been okay when he didn't see her. He could force himself to do other things to distract his attention.



But, as soon as he saw her, he remembered everything again. It felt like someone was using a blunt tool to gouge out his flesh piece by piece. As the other person was gouging, he was using needle and thread to sew up his wounds. In the end, the pieces of flesh he had sewed back would gradually fall off. The parts that should stay couldn't be kept. Someone else had mercilessly taken his most important parts away. Although the wounds weren't fatal, seeing her was like seeing the traces of his sutures, his heart couldn't help feeling sore.

Song Hui looked away, turned around, walked back to the group of scholars, and gave the lantern to a man wearing a piao piao jin hat and plain darkish red silk robe. Song Hui smiled and cautioned him, "This time, keep a careful watch over this. Don't lose it again."

The man touched the back of his head, laughed, and said, "Brother Song's reprimand is correct..."

Wei Luo lowered her eyes, held Zhao Jie's hand tighter, and said, "Older brother Jing, let's go."

Then, holding Zhao Jie's hand, she started walking away.

They didn't walk two steps away before that scholar wearing a piao piao jin hat rushed over to them. He stretched his hand out to give Wei Luo something. "Miss, please wait. Since Miss was the one who correctly guessed the riddle, then the reward should be given to Miss."

The item in his hand was a dark jade waist accessory carved into a python and with precious stones below the python. It looked like a man's accessory. Wei Luo couldn't use this. She shook her head and refused, "Thank you, but I just happened to guess right. I wasn't trying to get the reward. You can keep this."

However, that scholar was very insistent. Since she had guessed right, the prize should naturally go to her.

Wei Luo's face showed her hesitation. Just as she was feeling embarrassed, Zhao Jie reached out, took the item, and said, "Thank you." Then he bid farewell to the scholar and pulled Wei Luo along to leave the area.

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As they returned to Duke Ying's corner gate, Wei Luo was still in low spirits. It was a sharp contrast to her earlier happy and excited mood.

Zhao Jie brought her back to the entrance, lowered his head, and closely held her cherry blossom outer robe embroidered with reishi mushrooms. Seeing her drooping head, there wasn't a change in his expression other than his eyes darkening,. He called out, "Ah Luo."

Wei Luo lifted her long eyelashes. Not knowing why he said her name, she asked, "En?"

Zhao Jie took out the python waist accessory given by the scholar and asked her, "Do you want this item?"

The jade accessory's craftsmanship was very exquisite. Below the main jade piece, there were two bright, round pearls. Underneath the moonlight, the pearls faintly shimmered. Wei Luo glanced at it, wrinkled her nose, and said, "I don't want it."

Zhao Jie nodded and closed his hand around the jade accessory. Without any expression on his face, he threw the jade accessory into the nearby flowers and plants on the roadside. There was a clattering sound before the jade accessory was submerged into the dim light of night.

Startled, Wei Luo asked, "Why did you throw it away?"

With a serious expression, he said, "Since you decided you didn't want it, why keep it?" Then, seeing that Wei Luo didn't show any reaction, he helplessly sighed, leaned over, and hugged her. His face was snugly pressed against her soft, tender face. He said into

her ear, "Don't keep thinking about Song Hui. In the future, you can only think about this prince."

Wei Luo finally understood his meaning. She blinked and asked, "Why did you think I was thinking about older brother Song Hui?"

Zhao Jie's complexion faintly became heavier. He had an expression of "What do you think?"

She suddenly wanted to laugh. So, this was the expression that Zhao Jie had when he was feeling jealous. She took the opportunity to wrap her arms around his neck, tilt her head, and made an intentional kissing sound. As soon as she kissed him, she quickly let him go. As quick as a wisp of smoke, she quickly hid behind the gate. "I'm not thinking about him. I was thinking about that riddle..." She finally pretended to be angry and deliberately said, "Older brother, do you want to even control what I'm thinking about? You're already so controlling when I haven't even married you. What will happen after we're married?"

Zhao Jie stagnated for a moment. Just as he was about reply, "You..."

But, she didn't give him the chance to speak. She closed the gate, turned around, and started walking back to her room.

Zhao Jie stood at the gate and thought of the words she had recently said. He didn't know if he should be angry or laugh. In the end, he curved his lips and said, "Annoying troublemaker."

Clearly, these were words of reprimand. But, his gentle tone made the words seem more like affectionate words of wanting to spoil someone.

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The moonlight was sparse. The deep night became quieter.

On the way back to Pine Courtyard, Wei Luo wasn't discovered by anyone. At this time, other than Bai Lan and Jin Lu, who were anxiously and constantly looking at the entrance, everyone else

was sleeping. When Bai Lan returned by herself, Jin Lu scolded her after finding out what had happened. No matter what, she should have gone with Wei Luo. How could she return by herself? If something happened to Wei Luo, as a servant girl, Bai Lan should be in the front to block the danger.

Now, seeing that Wei Luo had returned, they sighed in relief and welcomed her inside.

Wei Luo changed her clothes. After cleaning herself up, she lied down in bed and went to sleep.

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After Mid-autumn Festival, each day was colder than the last.

In early September, Duke Ying's family's Second Miss, Wei Dong, married an imperial physician's younger son.

There was a long line of people following the marriage sedan sent by the groom's family. The scene was very grand. After Wei Dong's wedding, Wei Luo and Wei Ya were the only unmarried girls in the residence.... Oh, there was also Second Master's daughter that was born by an outside mistress, Wei Bao Shan. However, no one attached any importance to Wei Bao Shan. Normally, no one paid attention to her. It was to the point that Wei Luo had almost forgotten this person's existence.

Wei Luo had the status of someone waiting to be married soon. She couldn't easily go outside. Other than going to Mister Xue's and Han-shi's to do schoolwork and learn etiquette, respectively, she would also occasional go to Plum Courtyard to pay respects to Fourth Madam Qin-shi. The rest of the time, she would sit in the verandah to look at scenery.

There was a tall ginkgo tree growing in Pine Courtyard. Right now, it was the time for its leaves to change to yellow. When she woke up every morning, she could see the ground sprinkled with golden yellow leaves.

Today, she was wearing a moon white cloak with peony flowers while sitting in the verandah and looking at the leaves. Jin Lu came over to her after coming back from the main room. As she brought Wei Luo tea, she said, "Miss, Master has said he wants you and Young Master Chang Hong to go the palace banquet that will happen in a few days."

Wu Rong's emperor and prince had come to the capital a few days ago to come to an agreement about the relationship between the two countries. Wu Rong had declared its position about wanting to establish ties with Da Liang. After receiving this news, Emperor Chong Zhen was very happy. With a wave of his hand, he decided to hold a state banquet. He invited all of the court officials and the honorable aristocratic families to attend.

# Chapter 107.1

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If you wanted to talk about Wu Rong and Da Liang's relationship, three days and three nights wouldn't be enough to finish discussing.

Da Liang's citizens' primary impression of Wu Rong people was that they were bloody and cruel. They massacred and wreaked havoc. Wu Rong used to frequently invade Da Liang's territory. Da Liang's people who lived in the borders had been subjected to their torment and their lives had been extremely bitter and full of fear. This was why Da Liang's people didn't have any favorable impressions of Wu Rong people.

Since many years ago, as soon as people saw Wu Rong people on the street, they would attack first before talking or asking for reason. Currently, the relationship between the two countries had slightly improved and that type of situation had decreased. However, Da Liang's citizen bias against Wu Rong was deep-rooted and hadn't changed.

Starting from ten years ago, there had been several battles between Wu Rong and Da Liang. Wu Rong ended up retreating little by little and gradually curbed their arrogance. One of Wu Rong's heaviest casualties was when fifteen-year-old Zhao Jie led an army into battle for the very first time. Zhao Jie excelled at military matters and effectively deployed his troops. His unfathomable tactics were cunning and unpredictable. No one could guess what he would do next. Wu Rong's army was completely defeated without any chances to retaliate. They had to retreat about two hundred miles, apologize and pay reparations to Da Liang, and also express that they would no longer try to invade and occupy Da Liang.

After that battle, Wu Rong's emperor had a deep impression of Zhao Jie and had the utmost fear towards this youth, who was outstanding, despite only being fifteen years old. He couldn't help

shivering at the mere mention of Zhao Jie's name. After several years had passed, Zhao Jie's military glory still remained. Who knows how that old emperor would react after seeing Zhao Jie.

Sitting in Fourth Madam's room, Wei Luo drank da hong pai (a type of oolong tea) while listening to Qin-shi talking about this matter. Wei Luo couldn't feel slightly proud.

It was natural that she would feel proud that Zhao Jie was so powerful.

However, she felt it would be embarrassing to show this. She was afraid that Fourth Madam would laugh at her, so she kept her head lowered and pretended to drink tea to cover up her smiling mouth.

Qin-shi naturally didn't miss seeing her thoughts. After pouring Wei Luo another cup of tea, just as she was about tease Wei Luo, she suddenly thought of something else. Her gaze became concerned. "Ah Luo, it's not that fourth aunt doesn't want to see you happy. But, there are some things I'm still worried about..."

Wei Luo picked up a piece of candied white melon from a white and blue porcelain plate with a lotus flower pattern, put the candy into her mouth, blinked, and said, "Fourth aunt, just directly say what you want to say."

Wei Luo clearly remembered everything that Qin-shi had done for her during the past several years. She didn't have a mother and fourth aunt had done everything for her that a mother would do. She genuinely cared for her. Regardless of what Qin-shi said, Wei Luo wouldn't have any complaint.

Qin-shi's eyebrows were twisted together. After considering for a long time, she said, "You heard what I just said. Prince Jing's complicated thoughts are deep and difficult to fathom. And, even the brutal people from Wu Rong are afraid of him. Fourth aunt is worried that after you marry him..."

After saying half of the sentence, she didn't continue, but Wei

Luo understood her meaning.

Qin-shi words were tactful. She probably wanted to say that Zhao Jie was ruthless, tyrannical, and vicious. She was worried that Zhao Jie would bully Wei Luo after she was married to him. If their relationship wasn't good and something happened, then Wei Luo would be the one that would suffer. After all, Zhao Jie was a man, nine years older than her, and practiced martial arts in the barracks since he was young. If he wanted to treat her badly, it really would be too easy.

But really, would he be willing to hurt her?

Wei Luo thought of how she had rested her head on his leg as he warmed her stomach in the carriage. She had clearly felt his response, but he had endured and resisted merely because of her words. And, when they had met Song Hui, Wei Luo had clearly felt the change in Zhao Jie's mood. But, he had kept his anger under control and didn't embarrass her. Even though he had shown restraint to the point that his face had turned livid, he had only said, "Don't keep thinking about Song Hui" after bring her back home. He was this considerate and fond of her. At the moment, Wei Luo couldn't find another man like him.

Unfortunately, she couldn't say these words to Qin-shi. Wei Luo thought for a moment, smiled, and said, "Fourth aunt, don't worry. I heard from Liuli that even though Zhao Jie looks cold and scary, his heart is very good. Also, he doesn't bully women..."

Princess Tianji was Zhao Jie's younger sister. Of course, she would say positive words about Zhao Jie. Qin-shi wasn't the slightest bit comforted. She wanted to say more, but nothing she said would have any use. The imperial edict had already been received. This marriage would definitely happen. She thought about the future and decided to teach Wei Luo methods on how to manage and defend against her husband if needed. This way she at least wouldn't be at a loss of what to do after she married Zhao Jie.



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The day before the palace banquet, there was trouble in second branch's Bamboo Courtyard again.

Only Wei Bao Shan could cause Second Madam and Second Master to argue. At present, Second Madam had listened to everyone's advice and didn't lower herself to his level. She was waiting until Wei Bao Shan reached marriage age, then she would send her away by casually arranging a marriage for her. This matter would then pass. Although a crack had appeared in their martial relationship, they would still have to spend the rest of their lives together.

Then, why were they arguing this time?

## Chapter 107.2

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Just as Wei Luo and Qin-shi arrived at Bamboo Courtyard's main room's entrance, they heard Second Madam saying, "What type of occasion is a palace banquet? Only the capital's respectable women and girls go the palace banquets. How could a girl born from an outside mistress attend? Are you trying to disgrace House Wei?"

Qin-shi frowned. She evidently also felt that Second Master's action was very inappropriate.

Right after Second Madam finished speaking, Second Master Wei Cheng said, "This is why I wanted to talk with father to quickly give Wei Bao Shan a proper title and add her to our family's genealogy..."

Second Madam almost fainted from anger.

Wei Dong had just married. Second Madam hadn't even recovered from feeling sad and Wei Cheng proposed this type of request. For a split second, Song-shi even thought about divorce!

Even Wei Luo felt that Second Master was too muddled. Was there any meaning in his action? Wei Bao Shan was only a daughter born from an outside mistress. Even if she was included in House Wei's genealogy, her status wasn't honorable. The proper young masters and ladies in Duke Ying's residence all felt disdain towards her.

Wei Luo thought for a moment. Second Master wanted to let Wei Bao Shan attend the palace banquet, so that she could show her face in public and have a chance at a good marriage partner. For him to be so muddled-headed, it seemed like this daughter had bewitched him.

Even if she appeared in a public gathering, nothing would change. She was a daughter born by an outside mistress that shouldn't see the light of day. The aristocratic families that

accumulated wealth over a long period of time and knew the truth about her status wouldn't be interested in her. Even if they were interested in her, it wouldn't be as a legal wife. At most, she would only be a concubine. It would be better if she obediently married into an ordinary family. This way, she would have a say in her husband's family.

Wei Luo and Qin-shi walked into the main room and saw Wei Bao Shan, who was standing on the side.

Wei Bao Shan was wearing a white silk jacket and a violet silk skirt. Her simple and unobtrusive style of dress made the fragility of her character seem even more apparent. It was easy to find her pitiful. Her head was lowered and her eyes were red. Sensing that someone had come into the room, she only looked up for a moment before lowering her head again.

Second Madam was tired from arguing. She had sat down on a rosewood chair to rest.

Qin-shi walked forward to comfort Song-shi. "Dong-er has only recently left. Second brother-in-law and second sister-in-law, why are you fighting? What can't be calmly discussed? Is there a need to have such an unsightly argument?"

At the mention of Wei Dong, Song-shi's eyes became red. In the end, Wei Dong was her biological daughter. Her wedding had only been a few days ago and she missed her tremendously. "Do you think I want to argue? If he didn't bring up this type of request, why would I ..." Then, she covered up her eyes and didn't continue talking.

Wei Cheng was also feeling angry. He didn't respond to her words.

Without any warning, Wei Bao Shan walked in front of Song-shi and knelt down. She tearfully said, "Madam, if you're angry, then direct your anger at me... Father only said those words for my sake. If mother didn't die of illness and I had a place to stay, father

wouldn't have brought me to Duke Ying's residence and offended your eyes..."

Song-shi was born in an aristocratic family and had good upbringing. She could achieve the prestige of a legal wife. Hearing Wei Bao Shan's words, she rubbed her eyes, coldly stared at her, and said, "Who are you calling mother?"

Wei Bao Shan had gotten used to calling her biological mother, "mother". After coming to Duke Ying's residence, she still hadn't changed how she addressed her biological mother. Who didn't know that this was taboo? Under the strict rules of aristocratic families, only the legal wife could be addressed as "mother".

Wei Bao Shan stagnated for a moment. She quickly changed her words, "She's.... Lin-shi."

Lin was Second Master's outside mistress's last name.

It goes without saying that Second Madam rarely saw Bao Shan and wouldn't show any mercy when she did talk to her. "Your knowledge of rules is this lacking. If you attend a palace banquet, wouldn't people laugh at House Wei?"

Unexpectedly, Song-shi's words were very reasonable and left no room for other people to refute.

Wei Bao Shan shrunk her shoulders. She didn't say a word after this lecture.

After Wei Cheng calmed down, he thought that Song-shi's words were reasonable. Wei Bao Shan's upbringing and etiquette truly wasn't equal to other young ladies. If he wanted her to marry into a good family, she needed strengthen her knowledge in this area. His gaze fell on Wei Luo and he suddenly had an idea. "Ah Luo's knowledge of etiquette is the best. I often hear father and mother praising her. Ah Luo, how about you teach Bao Shan?"

Wei Luo had originally been standing at the side watching the excitement. She hadn't expected that conversation would suddenly

turn to her. She froze for a moment, then she refused, "I have to go to Mister Xue's and Madam Han's for classes. I don't have free time..."

Even Qin-shi didn't agree, "Ah Luo is busy preparing for her wedding. Second brother-in-law, don't inconvenience her."

Wei Cheng was unwilling to give up. He continued trying to persuade her. In the end, seeing that Qin-shi was resolute, he had no choice other than giving up this idea.

Qin-shi naturally wouldn't let Wei Luo be mixed up in this muddy water. A glance showed that Wei Bao Shan had many intentions. She didn't want Wei Luo to have much contact with this person.

After they came out of Bamboo Courtyard, even a woman like Qin-shi, who had a good temperament and upbringing, couldn't help frowning and saying, "Second brother-in-law is becoming more and more muddle-headed."

Walking next Qin-shi, Wei Luo didn't say words of disagreement.

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In the blink of an eye, it was already September 8th. The banquet arranged by Emperor Chong Zhen to entertain Wu Rong's emperor was today.

The palace banquet was held at Rong Hua Hall, which was next to the western pond. There were a hundred and eight tables inside the hall. The occasion was very grand. It could be seen that Emperor Chong Zhen was paying absolute attention to the diplomatic relations. After all, this negotiation was related to the common people at the borders and even the stability of Da Liang for the coming decades.

Wei Luo followed her family into the palace. She was wearing a short pink top with scattered flowers and a simple, light green gauzy long skirt. Her style of dress wasn't too outstanding. It was

because it was clear in everyone's mind that diplomatic relationships between two countries could only happen by becoming allies through marriage.

Standing out would only result in being punished. Whoever wanted to go to Wu Rong could stand out.

# Chapter 108.1

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The palace banquet hadn't started yet. The women from noble families were gathered in Rong Hua Hall's side chamber.

Only Wu Rong's emperor and prince had come to the banquet. Since there weren't any women from Wu Rong in the side chamber, the atmosphere was fairly cordial and harmonious here.

Wei Luo had heard that Empress Chen and Noble Consort Ning would both be attending the palace banquet. This was the first time that Wei Luo saw Noble Consort Ning. Although Wei Luo frequently came to the palace, she only talked with Zhao Liuli and Empress Chen. Other than seeing Zhao Lin Lang a few times, she never came into any contact with people on Noble Consort Ning's side.

In the center of the side chamber, next to the red sandalwood couch, there was a woman wearing a short-sleeve moon white top and a colorful silk skirt with golden embroidery. Her hair was arranged in a ling yun hairstyle with a white jade fan-shaped accessory that was connected to rubies and sapphires. In all details, she was richly and gorgeously adorned. She was probably fifth prince Zhao Zhang and Princess Lin Lang's mother, Noble Consort Ning.

In contrast, although Empress Chen's style of dress wasn't as showy as Noble Consort Ning's, she had a different type of beauty that was dignified and magnanimous. Empress Chen was wearing a deep blue-green robe embroidered with phoenixes and peony flowers. Her hair was arranged in a qing hairstyle with crystal and jasper hairpins. She was only wearing a small amount of makeup.

Empress Chen was currently lazily leaning against a large pillow embroidered with flowers. Her simplistic elegance was delightful. Empress Chen was naturally attractive. In terms of natural appearance, she was even more excellent than Noble Consort Ning.

However, she didn't like to mess with cosmetics and gauzy silk fabrics. This was the only reason why her appearance wasn't as brightly vivid as Noble Consort Ning.

However, this was the difference between a legal wife and a concubine. The legal wife was in charge of the general situation. A concubine needed to dress herself up gorgeously to curry favor. Wei Luo couldn't help thinking that if she were Emperor Chong Zhen, she would definitely prefer Empress Chen. Empress Chen could go to battlefields and formal occasions. She was superior to a concubine that only knew how to make herself pretty.

Wei Luo walked to Empress Chen, saluted, and said with a smiling face, "This subject greets Her Majesty." Then, she paused, looked at Noble Consort Ning, and said, "Greetings Noble Consort Ning."

Empress Chen was very happy to see her. She called her to come closer, "Ah Luo, come here. Let this empress look at you. How come your face looks thinner? Have you not been eating well?"

Now that Empress Chen thought about it, this was the first time she saw Wei Luo after she got engaged to Zhao Jie.

Empress Chen had finally arranged her son's lifetime event. She felt very grateful towards Wei Luo for resolving this matter that had greatly burdened her heart. Her attitude was also much more intimate than before. The rest of the young ladies were also standing nearby, but right after seeing Wei Luo, Empress Chen only called Wei Luo forward to chat with her.

Empress Chen carefully looked over Wei Luo's small face and asked in concern, "Are you too tired from preparing for the wedding or your dowry? If there's anything you're missing, don't hesitate to ask this empress. This empress will have Chang Sheng prepare...." She paused, suddenly laughed, and said, "I'm being silly. How could Chang Sheng need this empress to remind him? He's already started preparing everything himself."



Wei Luo hadn't expected that Empress Chen would say these words in public. The smile on her face froze and she became embarrassed. Faced with Noble Consort Ning and Zhao Liuli's ambiguous gazes, she flatly denied, "No... Your Majesty, thank you for your concern..."

Where did she look thinner? How could the empress tell? Wei Luo was very puzzled.

Unfortunately, Empress Chen was very happy with talking about Wei Luo and Zhao Jie's wedding and didn't pay attention to Wei Luo's words. Like an unstoppable stream, Empress continued, "You don't know, but Prince Jing's residence's upkeep hasn't been maintained and its appearance wasn't very good. There were even some courtyards with weeds that were grown to the height of half of a person. Those courtyards were finally being straightened out and repaired. This empress heard that he's renovated the receiving room, the main courtyard, and the inner courtyards. The interior of those rooms have been also been redecorated. The residence looks presentable now."

Wei Luo felt slightly uncomfortable. She didn't know what to say, so she lowered her head and seriously drank her tea while pretending that she didn't hear anything.

At this moment, there was suddenly the sound of porcelain dropping onto the ground.

One after another, everyone looked in that direction. They saw Gao Dan Yang's pale face. She was sitting at a black square table that was inlaid with gold and had spiral carvings. She politely half rose out of her chair to salute Empress Chen and in a grievance tone, she explained, "It's my fault. My hand accidentally slipped and showed maternal aunt this laughable scene..."

Empress Chen furrowed her eyebrows. Of course, she knew what Gao Dan Yang was feeling. How was it a slippery hand? She had clearly been upset after hearing their conversation. To be honest,

Empress Chen felt a twinge of guilt towards her. After all, she had delayed her marriage for so many years and she didn't give her anything in the end. But, she also felt slightly angry about Gao Dan Yang's persistence. She had already clearly explained everything. As long as Gao Dan Yang was willing, she could arrange a good marriage partner for her. But, she insisted on being stubborn and wouldn't give up on Zhao Jie until she personally saw him getting married.

What would change if she sees Zhao Jie getting married? Would she disgrace herself like today? Empress Chen's mood was complicated. She didn't blame her and only said, "Go change your clothes. Seeing that your complexion doesn't look good, you should go and have a good rest. It's important to pay attention to your health."

This was a tactful way of telling her to go home. The implication was that she didn't have to come back.

With great difficulty, Gao Dan Yang stopped herself from crying. She stood up, said "yes", turned around, and slowly left the side chamber.

As she was leaving, she felt that everyone was looking at her with sympathetic eyes that pitied her. She couldn't stand the expression in their eyes. Holding in her tears, she started walking faster and faster.

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After the banquet started, one after another, men entered the main hall.

The men and women were seated in separate rooms. Emperor Chong Zhen was entertaining the officials in the main room in Rong Hua Hall. Empress Chen was entertaining the ladies in the side chamber.

Emperor Chong Zhen was wearing a formal, golden imperial robe

with the twelve symbols. There was a guan crown on his head. Although he was over forty years old, his heroic appearance hadn't deteriorated at all. He was as magnificent as the setting sun.

From the front row to the last row, one after another, the court officials saluted and loudly called out, "May the emperor live thousands and thousands of years."

Emperor Chong Zhen waved his hand and ordered everyone to sit down. His line of sight turned and landed on Wu Rong's emperor. "Brother Wan, sit down too."

Wu Rong's emperor, Wan Qi Yu, was wearing a dark reddish purple formal robe. He was slightly older than Emperor Chong Zhen. The lower half of his face was covered in a beard. Even so, his handsome face couldn't be hidden. He had a high nose and deep eyes. No wonder people described Wu Rong's emperor as "the old emperor". How could they not think he was old with such a long beard? In reality, he was only older than Emperor Chong Zhen by two years.

Wan Qi Yu placed his left hand on his chest as a ceremonial gesture to express his gratitude towards Emperor Chong Zhen. Soon after, he sat down behind a table with slanted upward edges. Wan Qi Zhen, who was next to him, was wearing an official red and green robe with narrow sleeves. He was Wu Rong's fourth prince. He was seven feet tall and strongly built. His handsome face had a high nose and deep facial features.

Because he had lived in the wild grasslands for many years and experienced being blown by the wind and shined by the sun every day, his skin was very dark. But, he didn't look ugly. Instead, it increased his masculine appearance. When he sat down behind the same table as Wu Rong's emperor, it made the table seem smaller.

Emperor Chong Zhen was very easygoing. He indicated that everyone could pick up their chopsticks to start eating.

## Chapter 108.2

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After three rounds of wine, Wan Qi Zhen raised a wine cup to Emperor Chong Zhen and said, "People say that there are three good things about the Central Plains (another name for Da Liang). The wine is good, the people are good, and the scenery is good. After coming to Da Liang, these three areas were outstanding as expected. However, this prince has only appreciated wine and the scenery. I haven't seen the "people" yet."

There was an accent when he said these words in Central Plains language and he also stressed the word "people". Even if people didn't want to overthink his words, it was difficult to do so.

Wu Rong's fourth prince had an unruly personality. He was good at plotting and schemes. He was regarded highly as Wu Rong's clever and insightful prince. Otherwise, he wouldn't have been brought along to the Central Plains this visit. It was said that his ability was outstanding and his military achievements were excellent. He was also Wu Rong's best warrior and the lover that all of the young women in Wu Rong dreamed about. However, he was fickle in love and promiscuous. Starting from when he was fourteen years old, he had ten concubines in his home and an unknown number of outside mistresses.

Now, as soon as he mentioned women, while the court officials didn't outwardly show their feelings on their faces, they were internally frowning.

This fourth prince, he spoke these words without looking at the current situation.

Fortunately, Emperor Chong Zhen didn't lower himself to Wan Qi Zhen's level. He laughed and said, "Fourth prince's words made this emperor think of an idiom."

Wan Qi Zhen raised an eyebrow and replied, "Your Majesty, please tell."

Having another meaning, Emperor Chong Zhen said, "A wine-lover's heart is not in the cup\*."

\*(T/N: I translated the literal meaning of those words. This idiom is used to say that the other person has an ulterior motive.)

Wan Qi Zhen quietly laughed and decline to comment.

Sitting across from Wan Qi Zhen, Zhao Jie's expression didn't change. He lowered his eyes and fiddled with a xi jiao cup carved with lotus flowers and a dragon and phoenix. His lips curved into a trace of a fake smile.

Emperor Chong Zhen didn't continue to speak. He clapped his hands to signal for the dancers to come out.

Shortly after, one after another, lithe dancers wearing red robes embroidered with butterflies came into the hall. There were golden palace belts around their waists and sashes hooked at their elbows. Their hair was arranged into shuang huan wan xian hairstyles. They had slender waists with figures like willow trees. At the center of the large hall, the dancers swayed their waists and hands. They gracefully started to dance to sound of the lutes and Chinese harps.

Women from Da Liang weren't the same as women from Wu Rong. Wu Rong's people grew up in the grasslands. They had bold and unconstrained personalities and comparatively tall figures. Because the women were exposed to strong sunlight all year round, most of the women had skin that was a deep wheat color. There would occasionally be a few women with wheat color skin and their skin was considered pale. They couldn't be compared to the women from Da Liang.

Da Liang's delicate and charming women had dainty figures. In addition, they spent most of their time indoors in boudoirs, so they had exquisite skin and lovely coquettish personalities. Their movements and voices had implicit charm.

Wan Qi Zhen hadn't played around with women from Da Liang. Although he didn't know how it would feel exactly, he was sure it would be ecstasy that melted bones.

He supported his chin in his hand and looked at the women in front of him with great interest. While his mind was thinking about these charming thoughts about women, his face showed a pure-hearted smile.

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Two emperors from two different countries were gathered together. Other than discussing the founding of their countries, they could also make invidious comparisons. They compared their countries' territory, citizens, and court officials... Of course, they would also compare their sons.

Wan Qi Yu praised his son for being remarkable and outstanding. No one could match his son. Emperor Chong Zhen laughed in disagreement. One of the court officials couldn't help standing up and saying, "Our Da Liang's second and fifth princes are also giants among men. They are strong, healthy, and talented. They definitely wouldn't lose to Wu Rong's princes."

Hearing these words, Wan Qi Zhen looked across the hall and without even paying any attention to Zhao Zhang, he stared at Zhao Jie without look away.

Wu Rong's emperor had a very complicated feeling towards Zhao Jie. He both feared him and was unable to accept him as the winner. Several years had passed, was there really no one in Wu Rong that could be compared to Zhao Jie? If Wu Rong could win one match, he wouldn't have a psychological shadow in his heart the next time that he saw Zhao Jie in the future. At the thought of this, Wu Rong's emperor suggested to Emperor Chong Zhen, "This being the case, how about letting them compete? Whether it's archery or horsemanship, it would be nothing difficult for this emperor's son."

Since Wu Rong's emperor had said these words, Emperor Chong Zhen naturally didn't have any reason to refuse. In addition, he felt confident of his two sons and wanted them to win an honor for him. After he thought for a moment, he nodded and said, "In that case, this emperor will conduct an archery and equestrian contest the day after tomorrow and we'll see who the winner is. How does that sound?"

Without even thinking, Wan Qi Yu nodded and agreed.

From the beginning to now, Zhao Jie hadn't said a word. It was only after Emperor Chong Zhen had said his plan that he said, "Your imperial son will listen and obey to imperial father's arrangements." His words were calm in the face of this uncertain situation.

Zhao Zhang also stood up and declared his position.

Looking at the two of them, Emperor Chong Zhen nodded his head in satisfaction.

The palace banquet was carried out smoothly. The atmosphere was harmonious as the people at the banquet toasted each and continued drinking. Without noticing, two hours had passed.

Zhao Jie didn't have much interest towards this type of situation. Towards the dancers moving their bodies, he only glanced at them a few times. During the entire banquet, he seemed preoccupied his thoughts. What could he be thinking about? Of course, it was about the young girl in the side chamber next to this room.

He hadn't seen her in many days. Later, he definitely couldn't let her leave first.

As he was thinking about this, a palace servant wearing a deep blue-green robe walked over to him and quietly whispered into his ear a few words. In reaction to those words, Zhao Jie furrowed his eyebrows and gripped a teacup tighter. Shortly after the palace servant left, he stood up and bid Emperor Chong Zhen farewell,

"Your imperial son must leave for a brief of period of time."

Emperor Chong Zhen thought he had some urgent need, so he didn't ask any question before letting him leave.

However, Wan Qi Zhen raised his eyes to glance at Zhao Jie.

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After leaving Rong Hua Hall, in large strides, Zhao Jie reached Xin Yan, which was next to the western pond.

Underneath the dim moonlight, there was a young girl wearing a gauzy yellow short top and a pomegranate skirt. It was slightly cooler in the evening, so she also had on a pink silk cloak embroidered with scattered golden peonies. When she looked up, she was still covering her mouth. There wasn't anyone at her side. He didn't know why, but he thought she looked slightly pitiful.

Wei Luo's eyelashes fluttered. Even when he walked to her side, she didn't show any reaction other than silently turning her eyes to look at him. It was only at this moment that Zhao Jie noticed her strangeness. He lifted his hand to move her hand away from her mouth. "Why are you covering your mouth? Toothache?"

Then, using the faint lamplight in front of Xin Yan, he clearly looked at her face and his face suddenly stiffened.

It turned out that Wei Luo wasn't trying to cover her mouth. It was her nose! She had a bloody nose and it was still bleeding. Half of her small face was covered in a mess of blood. It was rather frightening. Zhao Jie's pupils' narrowed. He hurriedly took out his handkerchief to help her wipe the blood away. "What happened? Why is your nose bleeding?"

Wei Luo was also very depressed. In a helpless and grieved tone of voice, she murmured, "Liuli said my energy and blood was lacking. She forced me to drink a nourishing bowl of red date and longan soup."

This hadn't happened to her before. She didn't know if that soup



was too replenishing. A short time after she had drank it, her nose started to bleed. Scared, Zhao Liuli wanted to have an imperial physician come look at her, but Wei Luo stopped her. Wei Luo originally thought this was only a small matter and would past after a short period of time. Unexpectedly, her nose still kept bleeding after a long time. She could only have Jin Lu go to Zhao Liuli to request an imperial physician to come over.

Zhao Jie wiped away the blood. Just as he finished wiping away the blood, blood dripped down from her nose again as if it would never stop. She couldn't continue losing blood like this. He had to get an imperial physician to come look at her.

How much nourishing soup did she drink?

How much blood could be in her small body? It couldn't be that she would soon run out of blood, right?

His forehead twitched. In a cold tone, he ordered the hidden Zhu Geng, "Go and see where the imperial physician is. Why isn't he here yet?"

Hidden in the shadows, Zhu Geng made a sound of acknowledgment. There was a rustling sound before he disappeared.

Zhao Jie cleaned the blood from her small face again and carried her to an eight-treasure style couch. He had heard that putting icy water on a wound would staunch bleeding. At the moment, there wasn't any icy water nearby. It was late autumn and the water in the western pond was barely cold. He took out a handkerchief and said to Wei Luo, "Ah Luo, be good. Wait here for me. Properly lie down and don't move."

Wei Luo obediently nodded.

Zhao Jie looked at her for moment before turning around and leaving.

Wei Luo listlessly lied on the couch. In her heart, she thought

that she would never eat longan again... She had been perfectly fine before. It was only after being forced to drink a bowl of red date and longan soup by Zhao Liuli that she became unwell. She had lost too much blood and she felt dizzy. The scene in front of her felt blurry, so she stopped looking and just waited for Zhao Jie to return.

She had only closed her eyes for a moment before hearing steady footsteps in front of her that sounded like Zhao Jie's

Wei Luo thought that Zhao Jie had returned. She opened her eyes, sat up, and in a pitiful tone, she said, "Big brother, I feel dizzy..."

Startled, she immediately stopped talking.

The person in front of her wasn't Zhao Jie. The person was wearing clothing from the western regions. He had deep facial features. His eyes were improperly staring at her. Wei Luo furrowed her eyebrows. Just as she was about to speak, her nose felt warm. Soon after, blood started dripping from her nose and landed on the floor.

# Chapter 109.1

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Who was he?

Wei Luo clutched her nose and pondered in bewilderment. At this time, everyone was in Rong Hua Hall for the banquet. No one should be coming here. Seeing that he was wearing clothes from the western region and didn't look like someone from Da Liang and thinking of the important guests in today's palace banquet, she connected the dots and guessed the identify of this person.

Who was a person that could walk around the palace during the banquet and was relatively young. It was probably Wu Rong's fourth prince, right?

Thinking of this, she felt somewhat hesitant. She didn't know if she should stand up to salute or pretend that she didn't know his identity and continue sitting. In addition, she didn't like this person's eyes. His eyes were too exposed and didn't show any restraint like a man-eating beast.

Wei Luo eventually decided to pretend that she didn't recognize him. She took out her silk handkerchief and raised her head to wipe her nose. Her movement was skilled and calm without any sign of franticness.

Wan Qi Zhen leisurely looked at her. This was the first time where a first time meeting with a woman turned out like this.

The other person's nose was bleeding. He actually felt that her pitiful appearance looked slightly cute.

This woman was more beautiful than the dancers in Rong Hua Hall. Her skin was as white as snow and her hair was black. Her eyes were bright and her teeth were white. Her face that was as small as a palm was thoroughly exquisite. When her lovely, pink lips moved, it was very touching. Wan Qi Zhen's eyes flitted across this stunning image. Were all of the women from Da Liang this

beautiful? Just looking at her made him have the desire to want to possess her.

What kind of relationship did she have with Zhao Jie? Zhao Jie was heartless and cold towards other people. But, when he was looking at her before, his behavior had actually revealed that he was feeling anxious. It seemed that she was very important to Zhao Jie. His thoughts turned and he felt that he could understand Zhao Jie. She was such a beauty. Who wouldn't cherish her?

Just as Wan Qi Zhen was about to speak, he saw the young girl look behind him and call out, "Big brother!"

Zhao Jie walked past Wan Qi Zhen. His forehead was slightly wrinkled and the rest of his expression wasn't good either. He didn't greet Wan Qi Zhen before sitting down next to Wei Luo and placing the handkerchief that had been wetted by the cold water on her forehead. "Why did you sit up?"

Wei Luo lied down on the couch again, grabbed his sleeve, and said, "I recently thought you had returned, so I sat up."

Zhao Jie was silent for a moment, then he slightly turned his head and coldly asked, "Why is Fourth Prince here?"

Wan Qi Zhen finished looking. It was finally time for him to appear on the stage. He calmly walked past the doorway and reclined against one of the building's pillars that was carved with a cloud and dragon pattern and embossed with gold.

He meaningfully looked back and forth between Wei Luo and Zhao Jie. Then, he smiled and said, "This prince saw that Your Highness Prince Jing was in a rush, thought you were worrying about the archery and horse riding competition that would happen the day after tomorrow, and wanted to talk you about it. Unexpectedly, this prince was wrong and disturbed Prince Jing's happy occasion." The conversation turned and he asked Wei Luo, "And your name is?"

His words were too arrogant as if he was extremely sure he would win. It didn't seem as if he was here to talking things through. He was clearly here to provoke Zhao Jie.

Zhao Jie's expression didn't show any reaction to his words. His phoenix eyes were calm.

Who didn't know how to boast that he was a hero? At the key moment, it was real ability that mattered. Zhao Jie felt that it was beneath his dignity to lower himself to Wan Qi Zhen's level. The person that would win and the person that would lose could only be determined during the equestrian archery competition.

Although Zhao Jie didn't care about Wan Qi Zhen's provocation, it didn't mean that he was okay with the unbridled way he was looking at Wei Luo. Zhao Jie said, "Fourth Prince, are you very interested in this prince's princess consort?"

Hearing these words, Wan Qi Zhen was slightly surprised.

He had heard that Da Liang's second prince, Prince Jing, wasn't married yet. How did he get married so quickly? And that little girl didn't look old. At most, she was fifteen years old. Zhao Jie was probably at least twenty-five years old. Wasn't this an old cow eating tender, young grass? Or, could it be that all of the people from Da Liang were like this?

(T/N: Zhao Jie is currently twenty-three years old.)

While Wan Qi Zhen was thinking of this, he pretended to suddenly realized something. He cupped one fist in the other hand and said, "So, she's Princess Consort Jing. Excuse this prince for my rudeness."

Wei Luo didn't respond to his words.

Not much time later, Zhao Liuli and an imperial physician came over. The imperial physician put down his medicine box, came to Wei Luo's side to examine her condition. Fortunately, at this time, her nose wasn't bleeding as heavily as before. The imperial

physician took out a few pieces of ice and spread it over her forehead. Then, he put a ball of cotton into her mouth and pressed it against her upper gums. As a result, the bleeding finally stopped completely.

As the imperial physician put his things away, he warned her, "House Wei's Fourth Miss, your body doesn't need too much supplements. In the future, it'll be better if you eat less longans."

Wei Luo sulkily nodded.

Zhao Liuli was sitting next to Wei Luo as she guiltily wiped away the blood on Wei Luo's chin. She apologized, "Ah Luo, it's my fault... If I had known that you couldn't take supplements, I definitely wouldn't have asked you to drink that bowl of soup."

Anyways, it had already passed. Wei Luo didn't have any intentions of blaming Zhao Liuli. After all, her intentions had been good. Wei Luo had lost a lot of blood today and couldn't become more spirited, so she weakly said, "It's fine as long as you don't try to give me something to replenish blood."

Without even Wei Luo mentioning it, Zhao Liuli already had the idea of sending Wei Luo food that would be good for replenishing blood. After Wei Luo said these words, she immediately felt guilty. Even so, she didn't let go of these thoughts. She privately had a palace servant girl secretly put many items like fleeceflower root and codonopsis root into House Wei's carriage. By the time that Wei Luo discovered these items, it was already too late to return them.

## Chapter 109.2

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Many people were alerted by what was happening in Xin Yan. Shortly after hearing about what happened to Wei Luo, Wei Chang Hong and Liang Yu Rong rushed over.

Liang Yu Rong had originally been very worried. Seeing that Wei Luo was okay, she felt relieved.

At this time, the palace banquet hadn't ended yet, so Wei Luo couldn't return home, so Zhao Liuli had one of the side chambers next to Chen Hua Hall cleaned out for her to stay and rest. Wei Chang Hong personally carried Wei Luo to the Chen Hua Hall's side chamber, carefully put her down on the bed, and pulled the quilt over her. "Ah Luo, properly rest. I'll wake you up when the palace banquet is over."

Wei Luo quietly said, "En." Then, she closed her eyes.

Wei Chang Hong was vigilant. In order to protect Wei Luo's safety, he kept close to her as he guarded her. He wouldn't even let Zhao Liuli see her, much less Zhao Jie.

He calmly sat on the red sandalwood stool that was next to the bed.

A little while later, a palace servant wearing a dark reddish purple robe entered the side chamber, saluted to Chang Hong, and said, "House Wei's Sixth Young Master, Duke Ying had something he wants to say to you. Please follow me to Rong Hua Hall."

Wei Chang Hong asked, "What happened?"

The palace servant shook his head to indicate that he didn't know.

Wei Chang Hong could only stand up, tuck the blanket around Wei Luo, and leave the room.

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After Wei Chang Hong left, just as Zhao Jie was about come out from behind the lattice rosewood side doors decorated with magpies and enter the room to see how Wei Luo was doing, he saw that someone had unexpectedly moved faster than him.

After Gao Dan Yang changed her clothes, she didn't immediately leave the palace. Instead, she went to Qing Xi Palace to rest. She was Empress Chen's niece and had regularly rested in Qing Xi Palace before, so the palace servants were accustomed to her and didn't say anything. Hearing that Wei Luo was also here, she finally couldn't suppress the impulse in her mind and came over.

Gao Dang Yang had stopped next to the bed. Looking at the young girl who was serenely sleeping, round after round of distress welled up in her heart. Why did she easily get so much? Why did she steal away her things? Even her maternal aunt, the empress, who usually loved her dearly, was now clearly partial to this girl.

She wished that Wei Luo had never appeared in this world.

Once she had this idea, she couldn't stop thinking about it. Gao Dan Yang stretched her hands out and placed them on each side of Wei Luo's neck. She couldn't help slowly drawing her hands closed. Her complicated expression showed enmity and sorrow. She looked as if she didn't have any other choice and was suffering from hardships.

Standing behind the lattice side doors and seeing this sight, Zhao Jie's gaze suddenly dropped. Just as he was about to call out to stop her, he heard the young girl on the bed suddenly ask with her eyes still closed, "Older siser Gao, what advantage will you gain from my death?"

Startled, Gao Dan Yang's retracted her stretched out hands and returned to her earlier position.



Wei Luo slowly opened her eyes. Her large, beautiful eyes were calm as if she could see through someone's heart. She curved the corner of her lips and faintly smiled. Although her small face was pale, she wouldn't lose to anyone in impressiveness. She calmly asked, "Didn't you want to strangle me?"

Gao Dan Yang suddenly returned to her senses, wanted to maintain her remaining image, and said, "No... I only..."

Wei Luo didn't sit up. Her dark eyes turned and she stared at the golden canopy above her. Her lips curved into a slightly sarcastic smile. She spoke for Gao Dan Yang. "You just hate me. You're jealous of me. You wish I could die, right?"

After she concisely described Gao Dan Yang's feelings and seemed as if she didn't notice that Gao Dan Yang's face had turned deathly pale, she continued, "If I were you, I definitely wouldn't use this method. After all, we're the only two people in this hall. If I die, you'll definitely be the suspect."

Gao Dan Yang opened her eyes wider. She was shocked that Wei Luo could be so calm.

Wei Luo suddenly laughed. Her eyes were bright and she looked cute and sweet. "Older sister, you want to kill me? Because I'm going to marry older brother Prince Jing? But, haven't you made a mistake? Do you think older brother Prince Jing will marry you if I die?"

Gao Dan Yang's face became even paler. It felt as if someone was opening a curtain that exposed her shameful delusion. Standing next to the bed, with her eyes turning red, she asked, "How do you know he won't..."

"Because he doesn't like you." Wei Luo's bright, crystal clear eyes were very moving, but her following words were very cruel, "If older brother Prince Jing likes you, why would he delay for so long? You probably don't know this, but older brother Prince Jing told me that he wished he could be with me at every moment to

accompany me. He was so impatient about going to my home to propose marriage. He also said sweet, romantic words to me. Do you know why? Because he likes me."

Gan Dan Yang staggered back. The shock from hearing her words wasn't light. When she returned to her senses, her tone was fierce as she said, "I've already liked older cousin Jing for almost ten years. My love for him is deeper than your feelings. Why is it you? Why are you the one marrying him? Clearly, I'm more suitable. I know him better..."

But, what was the use of knowing? It was only her wishful thinking. Why did she insist that the other person return her feelings?

Wei Luo slowly explained that her words were irrelevant. "I also know Chang Hong. I've been living with Chang Hong since we were born. We've known each other for almost fifteen years. According to older sister Gao's logic, should I be marrying Chang Hong?"

Gao Dan Yang was stifled by her words. She didn't have words to refute her.

Wei Luo's large eyes curved. Like a stream of water, she smoothly and slowly said, "Although I haven't know Zhao Jie as long as you or liked him for ten years, we're going to get married. In the future, we'll continue to know each other for a long time. Perhaps, we'll be together for a lifetime. At that time, I'll know him better than you and like him more than you do."

Gao Dan Yang unexpectedly couldn't say a single word.

Originally, she had wanted to come here to declare her sovereignty over Zhao Jie. However, Wei Luo's words had completely defeated her. So, what if she came here? She had lost and became a shambled mess.

Gao Dan Yang stiffly stood in place for a long time. In the end,

she turned around and left.

## Chapter 109.3

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Zhao Jie stood behind the lattice side doors with his hands behind his back. Without noticing, his thin lips had curved into an obvious smile.

He hadn't expected to hear these words from Wei Luo's mouth, much less think she had these thoughts.

A lifetime. These words were really tempting.

When they were together, he was always the one who started things. When he wanted to be affectionate, she would refuse. Zhao Jie thought she didn't like it and had been controlling himself lately. He would properly love her after they were married. But, now he probably wouldn't be able to stop himself.

Zhao Jie said to Zhu Geng, "Tell imperial mother, if Wu Rong's emperor wants an alliance through marriage, Gao Dan Yang's qualifications would be very suitable."

Zhu Geng immediately understood his meaning and felt sympathetic towards Gao Dan Yang for a while, then he departed.

Wu Rong was thousands of miles away from Da Liang's capital and the journey there was arduous. If she went to Wu Rong, she might never return to Da Liang's capital.

It seemed that the prince was truly angry this time.

Zhao Jie walked past the lattice doors. Wei Luo was still preoccupied and staring at the canopy. Who knew what she was thinking about?

When her line of sight changed, she suddenly saw him. She froze in surprise for a moment before exclaiming in surprise.

Zhao Jie took off his ink color boots and silently sat down on the bed.

Wei Luo didn't understand his intentions. She opened her eyes

wider and asked, "Why are you here? Why didn't you go back to Rong Hua Hall to attend the palace banquet?"

What was the palace banquet when compared to her? Zhao Jie pressed her hand down against the bed, covered her body, and in the passing, unhooked the golden curtain. The bed curtain fell down. In a single moment, the scene inside the bed was separated from the rest of the room.

Zhao Jie's tightened his arms around her petite body and brought her closer to his chest. His face was pressed against her face as he slid down to find her soft and tender lips and kissed her. "You like to hear this prince say sweet, romantic words?"

It was at this moment that Wei Luo realized he had heard the words between her and Gao Dan Yang. She opened her mouth to explain, but he used the opportunity to enter her mouth, suck on her tongue, and continue kissing her. She quietly whimpered. A long time later, he finally let her go. She pursed her pink lips. She didn't know who's saliva was between her lips and teeth. In a lovable tone, she accused him, "You were eavesdropping."

Zhao Jie quietly laughed, sucked the bottom of her small, soft ear, and said. "There was a little one that said she wanted to be with this prince for a lifetime. If this prince didn't hear those words, wouldn't it be such a pity?"

Wei Luo buried her face into his neck. She felt slightly embarrassed.

Even so, she didn't disagree.

Zhao Jie really loved seeing this sweet and cute appearance. He held her hand and moved it down.

He leaned against her forehead and slowly rubbed against it. He painfully said, "Darling, this prince almost can't stand it anymore."

There was still one more year before they would marry. Even

though she belonged to him, he couldn't do anything to her. He was aware of propriety. He wanted to properly cherish her and didn't want to have her so soon. After all, she was still young. He wanted to wait until she was slightly more grownup.

But this process of waiting, it was very much like torture.

Fortunately, there were other ways to ease the pressure.

Startled and panicking, Wei Luo tried to move her hand away. But, how could she win against his strength? While struggling, her hand slipped twice. The sound of Zhao Jie quietly and hoarsely moaning went into her ears and made half of her body feel numb.

This was next to Zhao Liuli's resting chamber. Liuli could come inside at any moment. He actually... actually...

Wei Luo's cheeks were so red that they could drip blood. She originally wanted to resist. But for some reason, she yielded after making a show of resistance and let him have his way.

She knew a little about these things. After she was engaged to Zhao Jie, fourth aunt had secretly hinted at this. She knew that it was very normal for a married couple to do these things, but she still felt slightly embarrassed. After all, they weren't married yet...

Zhao Jie was breathing right into her ear. It was close that she could even feel it on the back of her neck and made her whole body have small goose bumps. She pulled her shoulder away. Her voice was as delicate and powerless as a small bird.

There was suddenly the sound of footsteps inside the room. It was neither too fast nor too slow. It was followed by Chang Hong's clear voice, "Ah Luo?"

Wei Chang Hong had recently been called away by Duke Ying. It actually wasn't a serious matter. After finding out about Wei Luo's condition, Wei Zhang Chun and Wei Kun had asked a few worried questions. Wei Chang Hong had explained everything in full detail and they stopped worried after knowing that Wei Luo was fine.

Wei Chang Hong was worried about Wei Luo, so he came back here after leaving Rong Hua Hall.

Seeing that the dense curtains were hanging down, he furrowed his eyebrows.

Strange. Why were the curtains closed?

Surprised by the sound, Wei Luo accidentally increased her hand's strength.

Zhao Jie stiffened and immediately uttered a smothered groan.

## Chapter 110.1

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In a single moment, the side chamber became utterly silent. If a pin were dropped, it would be heard.

Wei Luo could even smell a fishy odor. Her mind was blank. She didn't know what to do. Her palm had a sticky and hot wetness. She didn't even dare to move. She was afraid that Chang Hong would hear something and suspect that something was happening inside the bed. She was so tense that she almost wanted to cry. What was this? If it weren't for Zhao Jie, she wouldn't have fallen into this type of dilemma...

Wei Luo glowered at Zhao Jie and gritted her teeth. She wished that she could kick him off the bed right now.

She didn't know what Zhao Jie was thinking about, but he buried his head between her neck and shoulder, tilted his head to lick her ear, and slowly gnawed at her ear as if he still wished to continue.

How could he be satisfied? He had only gone half way before he was forced to come. As a man, he couldn't accept this setback.

Wei Luo didn't care about this type of thought. At this moment, who wanted to have a close relationship with him? She moved her head away to avoid him and lifted her hand to block Zhao Jie's mouth. As she pushed him to the side, she quickly thought about what she would do next.

Outside of the bed curtains, because he didn't hear Wei Luo's response, Wei Chang Hong walked to the bedside and asked, "Are you sleeping?" Then, he lifted his hand to move the curtains.

Wei Luo's left hand hurriedly grabbed the quilt as her right hand pushed Zhao Jie to the inside of the bed, then she lifted the quilt embroidered with golden peony flowers and tightly covered him with the quilt! After she did this, at the moment when Chang Hong was about to move the curtains, she pulled both sides of the



curtains slightly open so that only her small, blushing face was revealed. Her big eyes shone brightly. She didn't seem like someone who had just woken up. "Chang Hong, you came back? Did the palace banquet end? I already feel much better. Let's go back home."

Chang Hong was momentarily startled by her abrupt actions. His hand was still stretched out halfway. He felt puzzled and felt that Wei Luo was hiding something. He subconsciously tried to look behind the curtains, furrowed his eyebrows, and said, "Ah Luo, I think I just heard a sound from here."

Wei Luo was almost scared to death. With a guilty conscience, she asked, "What sound?"

If Chang Hong found out that she actually did that type of thing for Zhao Jie, she wouldn't have the face to talk with Chang Hong in the future! Wei Luo's other hand that was hidden behind the curtains viciously pinched Zhao Jie, but Zhao Jie's skin was as rough as thick meat. He didn't feel the slightest pain from her pinch. In response, he grabbed her hand and started to lightly stroke her palm. His action made Wei Luo feel a tingling sensation and her body trembled. She hurriedly pulled her hand away.

Chang Hong tried looking inside again. Unfortunately for him, Wei Luo was tightly blocking the view inside and he couldn't see anything. She didn't know if he was still suspicious or if he hadn't discovered anything. In the end, Chang Hong didn't pursue the matter. He grabbed Wei Luo's hand to pull her off the bed. "It's nothing. The palace banquet has already ended. Let's go home."

He had only held Wei Luo's left hand for a moment before she hurriedly pulled her hand away. Faced with Wei Chang Hong's puzzled expression, she smiled and pretended to be calm as she said, "I'll walk by myself."

Chang Hong didn't show any reluctance and only asked, "Are you really okay?"

At this time, even if she wasn't okay, she still had to force herself to say yes. Wei Luo casually nodded her head, bent over to put on her socks and shoes, walked past Chang Hong, and said, "I just had a minor nosebleed. I'm fine."

Chang Hong stood behind her. A short while later, he slowly caught up to her.

The two of them walked out the side chamber. Jin Lu and Bai Lan followed after them. Recently, when Wei Luo was lying down in the side chamber, Chang Hong had driven them out of the room and they could only stand outside to wait. Seeing that Wei Luo was fine, they let go of their worries.

After the palace banquet was over, one by one, the court officials and noble guests in Rong Hua Hall bid farewell. Outside the hall, their carriages came by to pick them up. Then, conveying their respective owners, each of the carriages started traveling home.

After they left Qing Xi Palace, Chang Hong stopped walking and said to Wei Luo, "Go to the front to look for father first. I'm going to arrange for someone to bring our carriage over. I'll go over there soon."

Wei Luo didn't have any doubts. She nodded and continued walking forward.

After Chang Hong watched her walk far away, he didn't go through with his words of going to prepare a carriage. Instead, he turned around and walked back to Qing Xi Palace's Cheng Hua Hall's side chamber.

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Inside the side chamber, there was a person sitting on the bed that Wei Luo had recently lied down on. He had wide shoulders, long legs, and a handsome appearance. He was leisurely tidying the clothes on his body. Zhao Jie was currently putting to order his sleeves that were embroidered with auspicious clouds. When he

looked up, he coincidentally happened to meet Chang Hong's eyes. There wasn't the slightest panic on his face. Without any changes in his expression, he continued with putting on his ink colored boots embroidered with golden thread and his wide belt before standing up and looking at Wei Chang Hong.

At this moment, Zhao Jie wasn't in a good mood either.

He and Wei Luo's mood had been so good. Originally, it could have lasted longer. He hadn't expected that Chang Hong would suddenly return and made him come earlier. How was this good? What kind of image would Wei Luo have of him in her mind? Zhao Jie originally didn't want to set himself against Chang Hong. He liked Wei Luo. If you liked someone, you would like everything and everyone that was connected to her. He was even polite towards Wei Luo's family. However, this Wei Chang Hong was an exception. He watched over Wei Luo too closely. It was really outside the range of normal siblings. So what if they were fraternal twins? Did this mean he could hinder the other person from getting married? Zhao Jie had never heard of this type of logic.

In short, Wei Chang Hong didn't like Zhao Jie and Zhao Jie didn't show a pleasant face towards Wei Chang Hong either.

Zhao Jie said a short hello before he walked past Chang Hong without even saying a single word of explanation. Someone who didn't know the truth would think he had a clear conscience.

However, Chang Hong had clearly heard everything. Previously, the movements on the bed had been so obvious. Only a deaf person wouldn't be able to hear.

He actually forced Wei Luo...

As soon as Wei Chang Hong thought about this, he became angry. For a moment, he didn't care about the etiquette between a prince and a noble. He turned his hand over and grabbed Zhao Jie's shoulder. He glared at him as he said, "What did you do to Ah Luo?"

Zhao Jie looked at him with calm dark eyes. His lips were slightly curved into a trace of a smile as he asked, "What? You even want to control what we do together?"

Wei Chang Hong very fiercely stared at him.

Although Zhao Jie's lips were curved, there wasn't a hint of a smile in his eyes. Word by word, he seriously told Chang Hong, "Ah Luo is this prince's fiancée. No matter what we do, it's normal. Wei Chang Hong, Ah Luo will become Princess Consort Jing next year. Are you planning on controlling her like this for the rest of her life?"

Wei Chang Hong's fist was clenched so tightly that there was a cracking sound. He gnashed his teeth in anger and said, "She hasn't married you yet, so I still have the qualification to be concerned about her. You better restrain yourself. If you force her to do something like that again, I definitely won't let you marry her."

Zhao Jie's phoenix eyes became heavy.

He wasn't afraid of Wei Chang Hong doing something. But, he was worried that Wei Chang Hong would say something to Wei Luo. Wei Luo valued her younger brother very much. She would absolutely listen to Wei Chang Hong's words.

His expression wasn't as calm as before. He coldly said, "Don't worry. This prince has a sense of propriety and won't do anything to damage her reputation."

Wei Chang Hong didn't believe him at all. There was no way that they weren't doing anything before. Otherwise, why would Wei Luo have flushed cheeks and slightly swollen lips? Did he think he was a three-year-old child?

In the end, Wei Chang Hong couldn't resist. He moved his fist to punch him.

## Chapter 110.2

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A few days after the palace banquet, because of a guilty conscience, Wei Luo still hadn't seen Zhao Jie again. She obediently stayed at home and didn't go anywhere.

On the tenth of October, people from Prince Jing's residence came over to Duke Ying's residence to send betrothal gifts. The betrothal gifts were carried over by two hundred eighty-eight people. Compared to the betrothal gifts sent over for Fifth Miss Wei Zheng, it was like comparing heaven and earth. Just carrying the betrothal gifts through the back gate took a day and a half.

Even fifth branch's steward's eyes became blurry from recording everything. There were over five hundred objects. Each item was very valuable. He didn't dare to be neglectful and had people carefully and gently put everything down. It took him several days before he finished recording everything.

It showed how much importance Prince Jing attached to Wei Luo.

After this matter, House Wei's reputation also rose. It swept away the humiliation from Wei Zheng's marriage. One after another, the madams in the inner court sighed. Wei Luo was a blessed person. Look at the entire capital. Was there any daughter from an aristocratic family that received such a huge amount of betrothal gifts? She was unrivaled.

There truly wasn't any doubt to the status of Princess Consort Jing.

Wei Luo had become the most popular person in Duke Ying's residence. No matter where she went, no one would dare to slight her. Second Madam had even especially called her to her second branch's courtyard to heap a pile of praise onto Wei Luo from top to bottom. Wei Luo's every aspect was pleasing. Wei Luo finally experienced the idiom; one must change according to the overall

trend.

Today, Old Madam called her to the central room.

Wei Luo remembered that when she was younger, Old Madam didn't like her or Chang Hong very much because of Jiang Miao Lang. Although she wasn't close to them, she was never harsh towards them either. However, her impression from childhood was too deep, so at the moment, Wei Luo was still slightly unfamiliar with meeting Old Madam.

Old Madam took off a pair of golden bracelets with bluish-green gems and pearls that she was wearing, personally put them on Wei Luo's arm, and said, "Paternal grandmother doesn't have anything good. My mother gave this pair of bracelets to me when I got married. Now, I'll give this you as part of your dowry."

Wei Luo was surprised. She remembered that Old Madam treasured this pair of bracelets very much. Even when First Miss had gotten married, she couldn't bear to part with them. Why would she give them to her?"

She made a move as if she was going to take them off. "Granddaughter can't take this..."

Old Madam stopped her hand and said, "Accept what I've given you. You and Chang Hong didn't have a mother since you were both young and have suffered. Paternal grandmother hasn't properly taken care of you either. Now, you're getting married. Just treat this as my kindly intentions."

Wei Luo pursed her lips and accepted.

After she had stayed in the central room for a quarter of an hour, a servant came into the room to say that Marquis Ping Yuan's daughter had come over. Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong had previously discussed that they would go to Ci Temple to burn incense in worship. Hearing these words, Old Madam didn't try to stop her. She waved her hand and said, "You can go."

So, Wei Luo left the central room.

When she arrived the reception pavilion, she didn't see Liang Yu Rong and could only walk around the outside area to look for her. Coincidentally, she saw Liang Yu Rong and oldest cousin Wei Chang Yin underneath a ginkgo tree.

Wei Chang Yin had just returned home. The two of them had somehow met and started talking.

Liang Yu Rong's cheeks were pink and she was smiling. Both of her hands were behind her back as she simply greeted Wei Luo. Wei Luo didn't know what they had previously said.

The two of them were standing underneath the ginkgo tree. The leaves were falling like raindrops. The ground was covered in a thick layer of golden yellow. The sun shined down and the two of them were almost hidden by the bright light. Wei Chang Yin collected himself. There was a smile in his pure eyes. He had never looked as good as he did in this moment. "I'm already fine. Thank you for asking."

So, Liang Yu Rong was still worrying from seeing the recurring pain of his leg injury.

Liang Yu Rong continued speaking without hesitation, "My daddy knows many doctors. If older brother Chang Yin is willing, I'll ask daddy to have them treat your leg. Perhaps, they might be able to fix your leg."

Wei Chang Yin shook his head and tactfully declined, "No need to waste your energy."

He was very clear about his leg's injury. It had already been so many years. If it could be cured, then it would have already been cured. He had also seen many doctors. They were all known as excellent, brilliant, and highly skilled doctors, but none of them could heal his leg. Wei Chang Yin had already accepted reality and no longer had any hopes. As a result, he no longer experienced the

feeling of disappointment.

Liang Yu Rong was very regretful. She quietly said, "oh," and didn't continue speaking.

She turned her head and saw that Wei Luo was standing in the verandah. She immediately smiled and started walking over to Wei Luo. "Ah Luo, you came."

Wei Luo smiled and also greeted Wei Chang Yin.

Wei Chang Yin nodded. Seeing that the two of them were busy, he didn't bother them and ordered a servant to push his wheelchair away.

Wei Luo saw that Liang Yu Rong's line of sight was stuck on Wei Chang Yin and knew that things weren't well. She quickly changed the topic by saying, "Weren't we going to Ci Temple? Chang Hong said he wanted to go with us. If you don't start walking soon, the sky will be dark."

Hearing these words, Liang Yu Rong finally returned to her senses, looked away, and followed Wei Luo to leave the residence.

After Chang Hong had found out that Zhao Jie had taken advantage of Wei Luo in Chen Hua Hall, he was even more nervous about her going outside even if Liang Yu Rong was with her. He had finished his assignment for today early and handed it in to Mister Xue to check. After Mister Xue nodded his head, he went with Wei Luo to Ci Temple.

Liang Yu Rong had long become used to Wei Chang Hong's habit of following Wei Luo and didn't have any suspicions.



## Chapter 110.3

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Liang Yu Rong wanted to go to Ci Temple to ask for protection charms for her parents. Her parents were advance in their age and their health was worsening each day. Liang Yu Rong was a filial child. Not only did she take care of them every day, she also thought about going to a temple to ask Buddha to bless and protect them. Coincidentally, Wei Luo was bored at home, so she decided to go with her and ask for protection charms for Wei Kun and Chang Hong in the passing.

Sitting inside the black-lacquered flat-roof carriage, the group of people arrived at Ci Temple and followed the grey-robed monks to the main hall. Inside the hall, it was currently the peak time of the day for burning incenses.

There was an endless stream of people here to worship the bodhisattva. The bodhisattva here had a famous reputation for being very effective, so many people had come here to visit.

When it was Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong's turn, the two young girls kneeled down on the praying mats and faced the stately bodhisattva statue. Holding three incense sticks in their hands, they bowed before putting the incense sticks into the incense burner. Then, they kneeled down on the praying mat again, put their hands together in prayer, and respectfully kowtowed three times.

Liang Yu Rong wanted to request three protection charms, so she had to repeat these actions three times.

Wei Luo originally only intended to ask for the two, but from time to time, Zhao Jie's face appeared in her mind. After hesitating for a while, she continued to bow with Liang Yu Rong.

After they finished, a monk gave them three protective charms. Liang Yu Rong curiously glanced at Wei Luo and asked, "Weren't you only going to ask for two? Who are you giving the third one

too?"

At this time, Chang Hong wasn't with them. He was currently outside waiting for them. Wei Luo pursed her lips and confidently said, "I asked it for older brother Prince Jing."

Liang Yu Rong's expression suddenly became ambiguously and she deliberately dragged out saying, "Ohhh. You sure think about Prince Jing a lot..."

Wei Luo angrily glanced at her. She really wanted to cover Liang Yu Rong's mouth.

As the two of them were walking out of the main hall, they kept talking and didn't notice the people walking into the hall. Wei Luo almost crashed into someone. Fortunately, her reaction was prompt. She moved a step to the side and firmly stopped.

She turned her head to look and saw that the other person was a middle-aged woman with exquisite black eyebrows and beautiful eyes. Although there were fine lines at the corners of her eyes, they didn't have the slightest effect on her beauty. In all details, her elegant bearing was outstanding. It could be clearly seen that she must have been a beauty when she was younger. Wei Luo didn't pay too much attention and only felt that she looked very familiar. She smiled and politely said, "Excuse me."

The woman stopped and stared at her without any expression. A long time later, she returned to her senses and somewhat helplessly said, "It's fine. Young lady, be more carefully when walking..."

Wei Luo nodded and left with Liang Yu Rong.

After they left the main hall, Liang Yu Rong curiously looked at her, then turned her head to look at that woman. She asked, "Ah Luo, that woman looks so similar to you."

Wei Luo was very disapproving of her remark. She faintly said, "Really? Perhaps, it's a coincidence."

Seeing that Wei Luo didn't care, it wouldn't be good for Liang Yu Rong to continue pursuing the topic, "Maybe..."

However, in her mind, she thought that they were exactly the same in appearance and temperament.

Wei Chang Hong was standing underneath a large elm tree in the courtyard while waiting for them. Liang Yu Rong wanted to continue to ask, but Wei Luo had already walked over to Chang Hong to show off the protective charms that she had recently requested. She proudly said, "I heard that these were personally made by the abbot. They're very effective. Chang Hong, I'll put it on for you."

Wei Chang Hong curved the corner of his lips and didn't refuse. "Okay."

Wei Luo stood on her tiptoes and took out one of the protective charms to tie it around his neck.

Wei Luo was too short. It was still difficult for her to do this even if she stood on her tiptoes. Chang Hong cooperatively leaned over so that it would be easier for her.

There was a woman silently standing at the entrance of the man hall. She was wearing a red cloak with a rounded embroidery lotus flower design. Seeing those two children that seemed very close underneath the tree, her eyes turned red without her noticing. As it turns out, a long time had already passed. They had already grown up...

After Wei Luo helped Chang Hong with tying the protective charm, they didn't linger and prepared to leave the mountain.

Seeing that they were leaving, the woman couldn't help taking a step forward. She opened her mouth and almost called out their names.

The servant girl next to her asked, "Madam, didn't you want to come here to worship Buddha?"

She froze and immediately stopped. Right, she was here to worship Buddha today. At the moment, she hadn't even seen Buddha's statue... But, how could she still be in the mood? She hesitated for a moment. In the end, she walked a few steps and absent-mindedly said, "Not today, I'll come back another day."

# Chapter 111.1

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On the road back to the capital, the black-lacquered flat-roofed carriage wasn't hindered. It entered the capital after it was driven past the outside moat.

It was still early in the day, so Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong didn't directly head back to their homes. They decided to stroll around the capital and take the opportunity to buy a few things.

Liang Yu Rong had recently heard about a candied fruit store in the southern part of the city called Ba Bao Xuan. The store also had specialty fruit candy. Not only did they have apricots, plums, and melon, they also had the rarely seen olives, begonias, and pears. These flavors were sweet and sour with a rich fruit taste. Liang Yu Rong had eaten the candy from here a few days ago and had been frequently thinking about it since then. Today, she finally had free time. No matter what, she had to bring Wei Luo along and go buy some of the candy to bring home.

Wei Luo agreed to go with her since she wasn't busy either.

The carriage brought the three people to Ba Bao Xuan. As expected, it was a place with many customers. There was a long line of people waiting outside that extended to the other side of the street. Most of the people buying the candied fruit were young women. The young ladies from noble houses didn't need to show to their faces. They had their servant girls waiting in line for them.

Seeing so many people, Wei Luo's enthusiasm faded. Troubled, she furrowed her eyebrows and said, "How long will we have to wait..."

Liang Yu Rong held her hand and wasn't the slightest bit worried. In high spirits, she led her away from the crowd and walked towards the store's entrance. "This store is owned by my older sister-in-law's family. If you come here to buy candy with me, there's no reason for you to wait in line."

Liang Yu Rong's sister-in-law was Marquis Lu Yang's second daughter, Wei Shuang.

Wei Shuang was seventeen years old this year. She was sensible with a gentle and agreeable temperament. She was the perfect match for Liang Yu. After they were married, they were a lovey-dovey couple that seemed to be stuck together by glue. Wei Shuang was already two months pregnant.

Wei Shuang's family had owned stores in the capital for over ten years. Ba Bao Xuan was one of them. So whenever Liang Yu Rong came to this place, she received treatment that couldn't be enjoyed by others.

The two of them entered the store and saw a girl selecting things at the front table. She was wearing a robe decorated with a light pink rose pattern.

Seeing Liang Yu Rong, the storekeeper hurriedly gestured for a shop assistant to help that girl while he personally came forward and said, "Miss, you came. What type of candied fruit would you like to try this visit?"

Liang Yu Rong looked around. There were various types of candied fruit displayed in the decoratively carved cedar cabinets. Each one looked very delicious. She had a difficult time deciding, so she pointed at every variety. In total, she pointed at eight varieties of candied fruit. "Wrap up two portions of those types... And that winter melon, wrap up two portions of that too."

Candied winter melon was the store's best selling item. As soon as one batch was finished, it would be swept away into the bags of customers. It was probably because not only was it sweet and sour, it also had a delicious crispness. It was sweet without being greasy. And the most important thing was that it wasn't fattening. It would also help with constipation and improve one's appearance by nourishing the skin. It was extremely popular with girls.

The storekeeper showed a slightly distressed expression. He

looked at the girl next to them and said, "There were only two portions of candied winter melon left. That girl has already requested it..."

Hearing this, Liang Yu Rong and Wei Luo looked at that girl.

When their gazes landed on that girl's body, the atmosphere immediately cooled.

This person was Wei Zheng!

In only a month, she had lost so much weight that she didn't look presentable. There were dark circles around her sunken eyes and her complexion looked horrible. Her eyes were muddy and Her lips were pale. If Wei Luo hadn't grown up with her, she wouldn't be able to recognize her. In the past, she had the appearance of a lovely, cute girl. Now, she looked more like a ghost than a human... No wonder she didn't go to the palace banquet. If she had gone like this, who knows how many people she would have scared?

Wei Zheng had also seen them. She hurriedly turned her head away to avoid their line of sight.

Liang Yu Rong opened and closed her mouth. She seemed to have been frightened by Wei Zheng's appearance. A long time later, she said, "Then, we don't want it. Give..."

Give it to her.

Her appearance was too frightening. Liang Yu Rong wasn't able to continue speaking the rest of her sentence.

Wei Zheng suddenly turned around to fiercely glare at her for a moment. Then, without even taking the candied fruit she had recently ordered, she turned around and left the store.

Her servant girl picked up the candied fruit they had already brought and hurriedly followed after her.

Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong looked at each other in dismay.

Liang Yu Rong incredulously asked, "How did Wei Zheng become like that? Did someone make a voodoo doll and curse her?"

Wei Luo blinked to indicate that she didn't know the answer either.

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Outside Ba Bao Xuan, there was a gorgeously decorated carriage parked at the entrance.

Jiang Miao Lang was sitting inside the carriage and looking at the figure that had left. She didn't let go of the dark green window curtain embroidered with golden peonies until that person was far away. She lowered her eyes and didn't say a word.

That girl had looked very similar to Du-shi. She looked like she was about the same age as Wei Luo. The carriage she was riding in also had Duke Ying's residence's symbol. She was probably a young lady from Duke Ying's residence.

Wei Kun... Did he marry Du Yue Ying in the end? Was that girl the daughter he had with Du Yue Ying?

Jiang Miao Lan thought about what had happened back then. Her eyes gradually dimmed and revealed the chilliness of autumn. Very quickly, she curved her lips into a self-depreciating smile. She had already been gone for so long and had changed so much herself. What right did she have to expect that Wei Kun would remain the same? Besides, when she had left that year, didn't she already know what had happened between him and Du Yue Ying?

Wei Kun's marriage to Du Yue Ying was within her expectations.

Seeing that her expression didn't look right, the servant girl next to her called out in Wu Rong's language, "Madam?"

Jiang Miao Lang suddenly returned to her senses. She pursed her lips, faintly smiled, and asked, "What's wrong?"

The servant girl pointed at Ba Bao Xuan, "Did you want to buy



something from there? Do you want this servant to leave the carriage and wait in line?" From the servant girl's perspective, she had rushed her from Ci Temple without even pausing to worship Buddha and stopped in front of this candied fruit store. She should probably really want to buy something from here. But, she had continued to sit in the carriage without moving. Her actions were very hard to comprehend.

Jiang Miao Lan tilted her head. From a small crack between the window and the curtain, she saw that Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong had walked out of the store. She considered for a moment, then she said, "No, follow the carriage in front of us."

## Chapter 111.2

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After they came out of Ba Bao Xuan, Liang Yu Rong went back with Wei Luo to Duke Ying's residence.

Seeing that Liang Yu Rong didn't intend to go home, Wei Luo felt confused and asked, "Didn't you say you wanted to go home?"

Carrying two bags of candied fruit, Liang Yu Rong pursed her lips and awkwardly laughed. With an expression as if her actions were completely normal, she said, "I bought candied fruit for older brother Wei Chang Ying. I'll go home after I deliver them to him."

Why was she delivering candied fruit to him? Didn't she only recently send him pastries? When would she stop? Would this be never ending? Wei Luo felt endless regret. She shouldn't have softened her heart and agreed to deliver those bags of pastries and candy. Great, now that their fate had started, it wouldn't be easy to break them apart.

Wei Luo asked her, "Why do you want to give presents to older cousin Chang Yin?"

She said, "When we recently met in the courtyard, I said that I was going to Ba Bao Xuan to buy candied fruit and asked in the passing if he liked them too. He said that he liked them, so I wanted to buy some for him too..."

Wei Luo had a headache. She really didn't know what she should say to Liang Yu Rong. She stretched her hand out and made an effort by saying, "I'll deliver this to older cousin for you."

Liang Yu Rong immediately hid the bags of candy behind her and shook her head like a rattle-drum. "I still have words I want to say to older brother Chang Yin."

Wei Luo looked at her and was silent for a long time.

She couldn't let them continue like this. The situation had already escaped her control and was slowly heading towards the

ending in her previous life. Wei Luo didn't want Liang Yu Rong to experience that pain again. After considering for while, she decided to have a honest conversation with her. Wei Luo had Chang Hong return to his room first, then she pulled Liang Yu Rong towards a quiet corner that was hidden behind a large rock. Completely serious, she asked, "Yu Rong, do you like my older cousin?"

Liang Yu Rong froze for a moment. She didn't expect that Wei Luo would be so blunt about asking her this question. Her white jade-like face quickly turned red. "I..."

She stammered for a long time. Without any confidence, she refuted, "It's not like that."

But, who would believe her? A discerning person would be able to see the truth in a single glance.

If she didn't like him, why would she do her best to treat Wei Chang Yin well? Why did she think about him even when she was buying candied fruit?

Wei Luo suddenly felt anxious. This foolish girl had truly failed to live up to expectations! She had given away her heart after only interacting with Wei Chang Yin a few times. Did she not think about her future? In a moment of desperation, Wei Luo blurted out, "Yu Rong, you can't like my older cousin."

Liang Yu Rong froze for a moment and subconsciously asked, "Why not?"

Wei Luo looked at her and in serious tone, she said, "Do you really not know why? My older cousin's leg is injured. He won't be able to walk for the rest of his life. If you marry him, you'll have to care of him for the rest of his life. Even if this does not trouble you, will your parents agree? Will the two of you have a happy ending?"

Wei Luo's words were slightly harsh, but she was only worried about her. She only said these words for her sake. Just as she

expected, Liang Yu Rong's eyes became red. The normally carefree young girl was actually feeling helpless. A long time later, she finally opened her mouth to say, "I don't think older brother Chang Yin is troublesome. I can take care of him for a lifetime..." She pressed her lips together. With a confused expression in her eyes, she continued, "Ah Luo, I don't know if I like him. Every time I see older brother Chang Yin, my heart hurts. He's such an elegant and refined person. He should be living a happier life. Do you remember how older brother Chang Yin looked when he was going through his recurring leg pain last time? I felt bad for him just looking at him, but he was actually able to smile." Then, she lowered her head and repeated, "I feel so sorry for him."

So, it was because of this reason...

Wei Luo face-palmed. She hadn't expected that she would shoot herself in the foot. Originally, she had wanted to Liang Yu Rong to take a step back after seeing that difficult scene. Instead, it had only made Liang Yu Rong feel sympathetic.

This was probably predestined fate. No matter what Wei Luo did, what was meant to happen would still happen.

Wei Luo thought for a moment, then she said, "But your parents won't agree."

Marquis Ping Yuan and his wife cherished Liang Yu Rong. No one would be willing to marry their daughter to a cripple. Liang Yu Rong also understood this point. She opened her mouth and tried to mumble something. In the end, she didn't say anything. She raised her head and beseechingly looked at Wei Luo, "Then, at least, let me see older brother Chang Yin one last time. Let me give him this bag of candied fruit. Okay?"

Remembering Liang Yu Rong's tragic ending in her past life, Wei Luo couldn't bear to say no. She nodded her head and said, "Okay, just see him one last time."

Previously, Wei Luo had felt defensive towards Liang Yu Rong.

She was afraid that Liang Yu Rong would fall for Wei Chang Yin. Now, she could no longer stop this. Since she already liked him, Wei Luo could only think of ways to help them. She couldn't let them make the same mistake in this lifetime. If she could find a way for them to marry, that would be the best.

But, did Wei Chang Yin like Liang Yu Rong? In her previous life, he didn't see Liang Yu Rong even at the very end. What type of feelings did he have towards her?

Wei Luo still had to carefully consider this matter.

## Chapter 111.3

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At Banyan Tree Courtyard, after Liang Yu Rong left, Wei Luo arrived at the entrance to Wei Chang Yin's room.

Inside the room, Wei Chang Yin was sitting behind a decoratively carved red sandalwood table. There were two packages of candied fruit in front of him. One was winter melon flavor. The other was begonia flavor. His gaze was slightly lowered. His long fingers were placed on the beech wheelchair. Who knows what he was thinking about?

Wei Luo had been standing outside the room for a while, but he actually didn't notice.

He didn't look up until Wei Luo knocked on the door. He smiled and said, "Ah Luo, you're here.

"Older cousin." Wei Luo used to rarely come to Banyan Tree Courtyard. Because of Liang Yu Rong, she had come here many times recently. She looked at the candied fruit on the table and asked a question that she already knew the answer, "Did Liang Yu Rong give this to older cousin? Have you tasted them yet? The taste is pretty good."

Wei Chang Yin lifted his right hand and pushed the candied winter melon towards her. He smiled and said, "I recently tried it. If you like it, you can take all of it."

Wei Luo hurriedly waved her hand and refused, "Yu Rong gave you this. If I took all of it, she would definitely be mad. Older cousin Chang Yin, it would be better if you keep them to eat."

Thinking of Liang Yu Rong's smiling face when she recently delivered the candied fruit, Wei Chang Yin couldn't resist curving the corner of his mouth.

Wei Luo thought about the reason why she had come here, sat down on the sandalwood kaiguan stool across from him, and

supported her cheeks in her hands. After hesitating for a long time, she finally couldn't resist asking, "Older cousin Chang Yin, how would you describe Yu Rong?"

Her words were slightly abrupt. Wei Chang Yin furrowed his eyebrows and didn't reply.

"Yu Rong has been a warm-hearted and kind person since she was a child. She's a very wonderful girl. Older cousin Chang Yin, even if I don't say those words, you can see that for yourself." Wei Luo didn't beat around the bush and went straight to the point. "But, she also has a one-track mind. She won't turn around until she's hit a wall. Because she's too close to older cousin Chang Yin, it's inevitable that she would have feelings. She's like a sister to me, so I have to consider her needs. Older cousin Chang Yin, if you don't have any feelings towards her, don't have any further contact with her."

Wei Chang Yin couldn't help clenching his hand around the wheelchair. His eyes darkened and his emotions weren't clear anymore. He always had a calm appearance, but there was suddenly anxiety in his eyes. He was silent for a long time. He didn't know how to reply to Wei Luo's words.

He had already known for a long time that with his body, he couldn't marry anyone. If he married someone, he would only be ruining her. Because of this reason, he had sealed off his emotions and suppressed his desires. He had never felt anything towards another person. But, he didn't expect that a young girl would one day violently collide into him and enter his life despite everything. She treated him fondly and considerately. He knew that she only did this out of sympathy, but emotions still stirred upwards from the bottom of his heart.

Wei Chang Yin couldn't help wanting to move closer to her and draw out more warmth from her.

Unfortunately, he had forgotten that he was a cripple and

couldn't give anyone happiness.

After being silent for a long time, he finally said, "Okay, I won't see her in the future."

Wei Luo's intention wasn't for him to retreat. She wanted to incite him into action. After thinking for a moment, she continued speaking, "If older cousin Chang Ying likes Yu Rong, wouldn't it be fine if you did your best to fight for her? You wouldn't be burdening her. If two people who mutually love each other marry, it's only normal for them to support each other. If you're worried about burdening her, then why can't you do your best to cure your leg injury?"

Wei Chang Yin looked at her. He didn't expect that she would change the direction of her words so quickly.

Wei Luo slowly started to speak, "When we went to Qian Temple, didn't that abbot say that your leg injury could be healed? You just need to find the doctor called Fu Xing Yun..."

Wei Chang Yin smiled and said, "I've already ordered people to look for him. They still haven't found him yet."

Blocked off by his words, Wei Luo couldn't continue speaking.

She had already said everything that she could. As she was leaving, she tried one more desperate tactic by saying, "Yu Rong's parents are currently discussing her marriage. If older cousin Chang Yin doesn't figure things out soon, there will no longer be anyone to bring you candied fruit in the future." Then, she looked at the candied winter melon on the table for a moment before turning around and leaving the room.

Wei Chang Yin sat in the wheelchair and watched her walk far away. Tired, his body slowly leaned back until he touched the back of the beech wheelchair. He slowly closed his eyes.

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A gorgeously decorated carriage was parked at the small alleyway



across from Duke Ying's residence's entrance.

Jiang Miao Lan was wearing a moon white cloak embroidered with magnolia flowers and lined with fox fur. She looked at this familiar residence and thought of her memories of this place. All sorts of feelings welled up in her heart. She had once lived here for a few years and had given birth to a cute pair of fraternal twins. At the time when she had decided to leave, she never thought there would be a day when she would return.

Now, she had only seen her two children for a moment and couldn't resist coming back here again.

Almost fifteen years had passed. Her Ah Luo and Chang Hong had grown up. Back then, when she had given birth to them while suffering great hardship, they were so small and seemed as if they would break with a single touch. Now, Ah Luo had grown up to be a young woman and Chang Hong had grown to be a young man... They had probably forgotten about the mother that had given birth to them.

Standing outside the carriage, Jiang Miao Lan looked for a while. In the end, she turned around and said to the servant girl, "Let's go back to the inn."

The servant girl didn't understand her intentions. They had gone to so many places. Was it really just to stand outside an entrance to look? Although she was very curious, she didn't ask further.

The servant girl lifted up the curtain. Just as she was about to ask Jiang Miao Lan to enter the carriage, she saw a person hurriedly walking out of Duke Ying's residence.

Wei Kun was wearing an ink-colored robe embroidered with golden thread. He had heard a servant say there was a person outside the entrance that looked very similar to Jiang Miao Lan. He immediately stopped what he was doing. Without even taking the time to put on his shoes, he hurriedly rushed outside.

Standing at the entrance, Wei Kun looked at the woman entering the gorgeously decorated carriage. His heart suddenly started pounding. He was afraid that his eyesight was wrong. He was scared that if he blinked she would disappear again.

Jiang Miao Lan also saw him. Shortly after, she turned around, leaned over, and entered the carriage.

The carriage didn't wait for him. The driver raised his whip to start their journey back.

Wei Kun finally returned to his sense. Disregarding his dignity, he hurriedly ran over. At this moment, he didn't care about his status or reputation. He only wanted to stop her. He had to stop her! He finally caught up to the carriage and not caring about anything else, he stood in front of the horse and shouted, "Stop!"

The driver was afraid of hitting him. He hurriedly grabbed the reins and stopped the horse. He asked in discontentment, "Do you no longer want to live?"

Wei Kun didn't even look at him. His gaze was fixed on the tightly closed curtains. His eyes were pleading and his mouth was trembling. "Don't go... Please, don't go. Let me see you."

# Chapter 112.1

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The carriage driver couldn't drive him away, so he asked the woman inside the carriage, "Madam, what should we do..."

Jiang Miao Lan closed her eyes. A long time later, she slowly opened her eyes and her firm voice traveled outside, "Ignore him."

Hearing her order, the carriage driver looked at Wei Kun with impatience. Because he was someone from Wu Rong, his temperament was rather brutal. Previously, he had felt apprehension because they were in Da Liang, so he acted politely by not directly running this person over. Now, after receiving Jiang Miao Lan's order, the carriage driver whipped the back of the horse and mercilessly moved the carriage forward in Wei Kun's direction!

Stunned, Wei Kun opened his eyes wider and quickly moved to the side to evade. The horse's legs heavily came down on the spot that he had recently firmly stood and caused dust to rise. As the gorgeously decorated carriage passed by him, the wind swept up the carriage's window curtain for a moment. Through the gap between the window and the curtain, he saw a familiar face. Before he had time to carefully look, the carriage was already far away.

He froze in place and looked in the direction the carriage had left in. He was so stirred up that he couldn't control himself.

It was her. It really was her!

So many years had passed. She had finally returned.

When he had clearly heard Jiang Miao Lan's voice, he could almost immediately confirm that it was her. Because when she spoke the final syllable, her gentle and charming voice was slightly raised and dragged out. He would never forget her voice.

When did she return? Why was she with people from Wu Rong? Where had she gone during the past years? Did she come back to

Duke Ying's residence to see her two children?

Wei Kun let his imaginations run wild. During this impulsive mood, he almost chased after her. However, after mounting a nearby jubube red horse, he had a sudden thought and stopped. At this time, she probably no longer wanted to see him. If he rashly went after her, he would increase her loathing. Just like recently, she wasn't willing to even see him for a moment and cold-bloodedly ordered the carriage driver to drive past him.

Wei Kun tightened his grip on the reins. Blue veins protruded on the back of his hands. He struggled for a long time, but he still chose to jump off the horse.

The gatekeeper at the entrance came up to greet him. Wei Kun handed the reins to him and didn't enter the residence. Instead, he called out to the normally hidden shadow guards and ordered, "Follow after that carriage. Find out where it stops at and where the people inside the carriage live... No matter what you find out, tell me."

The guards wearing deep black clothing nodded their heads in acknowledgment, "This subordinate will do as you ordered."

Wei Kun didn't say anything else. Lost in his thoughts, he walked back into the residence.

Wei Luo had recently returned to Pine Courtyard from Banyan Tree Courtyard. Seeing him, she remembered the protective charms she had asked from Ci Temple. She curved her apricot eyes and brightly approached him, "Daddy, I went to Ci Temple with Chang Hong and asked for a protective charm for you." Then, she took out an embroidered crimson sachet from her sleeve. The protective charm was inside. She handed it over to Wei Kun. "This was personally blessed by the abbot. It's guaranteed to give you a lifetime of peace and safety."

Wei Kun inattentively accepted the item. He held it in his hand and twirled it around twice. She didn't know what he was thinking

about. Suddenly, he lifted his head and looked at Wei Luo with a burning gaze, "Ah Luo, when you went to Ci Temple, did you see someone?"

Wei Luo tilted her head. Confused, she asked, "I saw many people today. What type of person is daddy asking about?"

Wei Kun paused, thought for a moment, and finding it difficult to mention this topic, he said, "For example, a person you find familiar..."

Wei Luo considered his words for a while, then she shook her head and said, "I haven't."

Wei Kun's eyes inevitably showed disappointment. He nodded and didn't say anything else to Wei Luo before walking towards his study

Normally, he would definitely be very happy to receive this protective charm. He would praise Wei Luo for being thoughtful and ask her where she went after leaving Ci Temple. But today, he was reticent. He probably didn't even know what he was holding in his hand as he desolately walked away.

Wei Luo stood in place and looked at his figure from behind. The smile on her face had already gradually disappeared and left behind an unfathomable expression.

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Today was the equestrian archery competition.

The competition was held in the palace's western training area. Many young warriors were invited to attend. The training area was vast and people couldn't see the end point at the entrance. At this time, it was late autumn. The autumn scenery was desolate with withered vegetation and fallen leaves everywhere. When the cold wind swept past, it added to the heroic atmosphere. On the northern side of this site, a simple platform was constructed with two levels for the people to watch the competition.

Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong had been especially invited here by Zhao Liuli to support Da Liang's warriors.

As an honorable princess, Zhao Liuli was sitting behind a decoratively carved, red sandalwood table with curved ends that was next to Emperor Chong Zhen and Empress Chen. As a result, Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong were also in the spotlight and sitting in the top layer. The field of view was very good here. In a single glance, they could clearly see the entire competition area.

There were two rows of people standing in the competition area. One row was Wu Rong people wearing their native clothing. The other row was Da Liang's warriors dressed in deep black robes embroidered with golden thread. Wu Rong people were slightly rugged with tough and stocky builds and looked rather scary.

In contrast, although Da Liang's people didn't look as sturdy, they didn't lose to them in impressing appearances and heroic aura, especially Zhao Jie. He was riding a horse that was at the front of the line. Although he was clearly wearing the same clothes as everyone else, his valiant aura was greater. The edge of his collar was embroidered with a twinning lotus pattern. His back was tall and straight and his eyebrows were like swords. Even without speaking, his solemn expression gave off an invisible feeling of oppressive pressure.

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Wei Luo supported her cheeks in her hands. She wanted to look, but also felt too embarrassed to look in that direction. Her eyes would sneakily flutter over there like she was thief that was stealing peeps.

Seeing her like this, Zhao Liuli and Liang Yu Rong couldn't help laughing. Who didn't know that they were engaged? Even if she openly looked at him, no one would say anything. But, her face

was thin and her furtive action only made people needlessly laugh at her.

Zhao Liuli leaned over so that she was next to Wei Luo's ear and whispered, "Ah Luo, my older brother is looking at you."

Wei Luo's heart jumped. She obediently followed Liuli's line of sight and saw Zhao Jie sitting on a qinghai horse. He was directly looking forward. How was he looking at her? It was only now that Wei Luo realized she had been lied to. Her apricot eyes looked at Zhao Liuli in annoyance for a moment.

This Zhao Liuli! Since she had gotten together with Yang Zhen, she had started to follow his bad examples!

Wei Luo didn't continue to pay attention to the two of them. She single-heartedly listened to the old eunuch that was Emperor Chong Zhen's side. He was announcing the competition's rules.

The equestrian archery competition would consist of three rounds. The first round would be archery. The second round would be horsemanship. The third round would be shooting arrows while riding a horse. Each round would consist of three people from each side. Whichever team won two out of three rounds would be the winning team. Zhao Zhang and Zhao Jie were assigned to the second and third round, respectively. Across from them, Wu Rong's fourth prince, Wan Qi Zhen, would also be the third round.

If each round took an hour, she would have to wait at least another hour until it was Zhao Jie's turn. Wei Luo looked at Zhao Jie, who as the forefront, and lost her senses without noticing. When she returned to her senses, she discovered that Zhao Jie was looking at her with a smile. She blushed, but she didn't look away. She mouthed the words "properly compete". She wanted him to take this competition seriously.

Zhao Jie restrained himself and looked away. He said to Emperor Chong Zhen, who was on the viewing platform, "Imperial father,

your imperial son won't disappoint you.”

Emperor Chong Zhen nodded his head in satisfaction and waved his hand to gesture for him to return to the group to join the competition.

Holding the reins, Zhao Jie rode away.

She didn't why. Wei Luo thought he had said those words for her. She touched her burning cheeks. Her pursed lips showed an almost imperceptible smile. Since the last palace banquet, they hadn't seen each other in many days. As soon as she saw him, Wei Luo thought about the object she had held in her hand. She felt shameful and embarrassed, but she didn't have any sense of disgust or dislike. It was because she liked him and wanted him to be happy. Seeing him today, Wei Luo realized that she had really missed him.



## Chapter 112.2

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Palace servants struck the leather bass drums with the drumsticks they were holding in their hands three times to publicly declare that the equestrian archery competition was officially starting.

On the viewing platform, an old eunuch shouted out, "First round of the competition, archery."

Right after his announcement, three young warriors came out on both sides. One of them was Wei Luo's third cousin, Wei Chang Xian (Qin-shi's son). Wei Chang Xian just had his adulthood ceremony this year. Although he was an unruly child, he had grown up to be an excellent young nobleman with an elegant and dignified bearing. He seemed to be well prepared as he rode a horse to the center of the training field and saluted the other person by cupping one fist in the other hand.

Wei Luo knew that Wei Chang Xian had excelled in archery with a high rate of accuracy since he was a child. But, she didn't know how he would compare to these Wu Rong people.

A score of palace servants pushed the targets onto the field. An old eunuch explained the rules of this round. There were a total of ten targets on the field. Each following target was placed farther away from the warriors. Each person would have an opportunity to keep shooting arrows until he failed to reach the target. The team with the arrow that landed on the farthest target would be the winner of this round.

The first person that stepped forward from Da Liang's side was the Minister of Revenue's son. With an idea of what he would do, he took out an arrow from the quiver and placed it against the bow that was decorated with animal horns. His movements were as fluid as flowing water. He quickly shot out three arrows. Each of them landed on the bullseye! On the fourth target, his arrow struck

just outside the bullseye. The fifth target was ten meters away from the fourth target. With great difficulty, his arrow struck the fifth target. When he reached the sixth target, his arrow wasn't close at all and it flew past the target.

As a result, he only shot five targets successfully.

A Wu Rong warrior followed after him. The first Wu Rong person had the same result as the Minister of Revenue's son. He successfully shot five targets.

The second Da Liang person shot six targets.

As for the next two Wu Rong people, one successfully shot seven targets and the other one reached eight targets. This made Da Liang's side tenser.

Wu Rong's emperor laughed, cupped his hands, and politely said to Emperor Chong Zhen, "You let me win."

Emperor Chong Zhen's smile looked slightly forced. He placed all of his hopes onto Wei Chang Xian.

Wei Chang Xian calmly and unhurriedly rode his horse around the competition area twice to measure the distance from the tenth target. He didn't even try for the first nine targets. He took an arrow out of his quiver, pulled the bowstring, narrowed one eye, and targeted the furthest target.

The onlookers couldn't help gasping. His move was really risky. If he failed this shot, then he wouldn't even have one successfully shot arrow!

Even Emperor Chong Zhen couldn't help furrowing his eyebrows.

However, Wei Chang Xian didn't show the slightest sign of panic. He steadily stared at the target. Then, he let go of his right hand without any warning and the shadow of the arrow swiftly passed his face.

Bullseye!

There was a burst of loud applause and cheering from the viewing stands. Even their competitors, the Wu Rong people, couldn't help nodding their heads in admiration.

Wei Chang Xian turned his horse's head around. There was a touch of a high-spirited smile on his lips as he followed the other two people to the viewing stands.

There wasn't any doubt that Da Liang was the winner of this round.

Wu Rong's emperor's expression slightly changed and he said to Emperor Chong Zhen, "As expected, Da Liang has a large number of talented people."

Emperor Chong Zhen laughed and copied his earlier words, "You let me win."

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The second round was the riding competition.

Wei Luo returned to her senses from watching the previous round. She turned her head and discovered that Liang Yu Rong had disappeared from her side. She curiously asked, "Where's Yu Rong?"

Zhao Liuli also didn't know when and why she had left. She asked a nearby servant girl. The servant girl explained, "Miss Liang recently said she had something she needed to do and would be leaving first."

At this time, what could she possibly be doing?

Wei Luo was endlessly puzzled. She wasn't too worried originally, but a sudden thought flashed through her mind. She hurriedly looked at the other side of the viewing platform. As expected, the spot where Wei Chang Yin had been sitting was empty! Wei Luo immediately guessed what had happened. She felt

both anxious and angry. She scolded Liang Yu Rong in her mind for failing to live up to expectations and not showing any improvement.

After carefully considering, she couldn't continue sitting here. She made up a small excuse and after telling Zhao Liuli, she left the viewing platform.

The training arena's gate wasn't far away from the viewing platform. She walked through the gate and passed a limestone-paved path that was lined on both sides with sequoia trees. There would be a garden up front. Wei Luo continued walking down the path. As expected, she saw two people underneath a sequoia tree.

Liang Yu Rong was wearing a short green top and a long skirt. She was sitting on a stone beneath the tree. Her head was slightly hanging. Wei Luo didn't know what they had already said. Wei Chang was sitting in his beech wheelchair as always and quietly looking at her with a clear and gentle gaze. His lips were opening and closing. As for what he was saying, Wei Luo was too far away and couldn't hear.

Later, seeing Liang Yu Rong's tears, Wei Chang Yin froze for a moment. With a helpless expression, he took out a silk handkerchief from his sleeve and brought it to her for her to wipe her tears. Liang Yu Rong didn't take it. She continued to cry with her head lowered. Fortunately, the place they had selected was relatively hidden and only Wei Luo saw them. If Wei Luo hadn't especially looked for them, she wouldn't have found them here either.

Seeing that she wouldn't accept the handkerchief, Wei Chang Yin helplessly sighed, lifted up the silk handkerchief, and gently wiped her tears for her.

This was the first time that Wei Luo saw her oldest cousin being so attentive and gentle towards another person.

He also liked Liang Yu Rong, right? In her previous life, his only

choice was to give her up because of his injured leg.

Since they were given another chance and they had already reached this point, Wei Luo couldn't be like Liang Yu Rong's parents in her past life and try to separate them. She had to think of a way to heal Wei Chang Yin's leg. Even if his leg couldn't be healed, she had to find a way for them to be together.

After making up her mind, Wei Luo didn't walk forward. She turned around and left the area.

After Wei Luo returned to the viewing platform, Zhao Liuli tilted her head and asked, "Ah Luo, where did you go for so long? The second round has already finished."

Wei Luo pursed her lips and explained, "I got lost, so it took me longer to come back..." She looked at the training field and changed the topic by asking, "It ended? Who won?"

Zhao Zhang had participated in the second round against the Wu Rong people.

Zhao Liuli glanced at Emperor Chong Zheng, who was sitting near them, pulled back her shoulders, and whispered, "Something happened with fifth brother. Wu Rong won."

# Chapter 113.1

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Lost?

Wei Luo was slightly surprised. Wu Rong people grew up riding on horses. She had heard that they started riding horses when they were five years old. They all had exceptional horsemanship, even the women could ride galloping horses in the grassland. It wasn't that shameful for Zhao Zhang to lose to them. But from Zhao Liuli's words, it seemed as if the way he had lost was wrong.

Did something happen?

Wei Luo wanted to ask her, but after seeing Emperor Chong Zhen's unpleasant expression, she paused and decided to not ask.

Coincidentally, the third round was starting.

This round was equestrian archery. Although each group had three people, the focus of the contest was on Zhao Jie and Wan Qi Zhen. The rules of the contest were that the people would ride horses around the competition arena while the palace servants let go of sparrows outside of that area. Whichever team collectively shot the most number of birds would be the winning team. Since the first two rounds were a tie between Da Liang and Wu Rong, this round was crucial.

Everyone's gaze was fixed on the people below. Even on the viewing platform, Wei Luo and Zhao Luili couldn't help feeling nervous.

Outside of the competition arena, the leather drums were struck. One of Wu Rong's warriors was the first one to step forward.

Thirty minutes later, Da Liang and Wu Rong had shot a total of fifteen and eighteen sparrows, respectively. The last part of the third round would be Zhao Jie's and Wan Qi Zhen's turn.

Wan Qi Zhen was wearing an embroidered han fu robe with the right layer of the robe on the top as he rode a black horse out. His

shoulders were broad and he had an awe-inspiring presence. He lifted his right hand and placed it on the left side of his chest to salute Emperor Chong Zhen and Wu Rong's emperor. Then, he tightened his grip on the reins and heroically shouted, "Jia" to urge the horse forward. He rushed forward like a shot arrow.

At the same time, the palace servants released dozens of birds. As they flew up towards the sky, they passed over Wan Qi Zhen's head.

When Wan Qi Zhen drew back his bow, his movement was as smooth as flowing water. He released the arrow as soon as he targeted a sparrow. The sparrow dropped the ground. Without even glancing at it, he shot a second sparrow, a third sparrow... It seemed as if he shot with unfailing accuracy and never missed!

Stunned, the nearby palace servant counted, "Fourteen, fifteen, sixteen..."

By the time he lapped around the competition arena and returned, he had shot a total of twenty-one sparrows! The Wu Rong people had already shot eighteen sparrows. Everyone calculated in their minds and couldn't help sweating in worry from Zhao Jie. If Da Liang wanted to win, he would have to shoot at least twenty-five sparrows. However, there hadn't been any pause in Wan Qi Zhen's speed when he was shooting the arrows. Could Zhao Jie be even quicker than him?

Even Emperor Chong Zhen couldn't help furrowing his eyebrows.

Wei Luo looked in Zhao Jie's direction. It would be a lie if she said she wasn't worried. Although she also wanted him to win, she didn't want him to feel too much pressure. The important thing about participating was that he only needed to do his best.

In contrast, Zhao Jie didn't show any signs of anxiousness. He showed the same calmness as before. When Wan Qi Zhen cast a meaningful glance at him, he let it pass by him without any change

in his expression. He urged the horse forward at the starting place. As if he felt something, Zhao Jie slanted his head to look in Wei Luo's direction. Because they were too far apart, Wei Luo couldn't clearly see his expression and only saw that he quickly looked away. After the drums were struck, he rushed into the competition arena.

His body was tall and slim, but he looked even taller while riding a horse. A gust of wind caused his dark black robes embroidered with golden thread to flutter. His entire body seemed like an exquisite and sharp sword that had been unsheathed. Looking at him was enough to delight everyone's eyes and make them lose their senses. When the people on the viewing platforms had regained their senses, they saw him taking out two jin pu gu arrows, attaching them to the bow, aiming them at the sky, pulling the bowstring...

One after another, everyone gasped. Prince Jing was planning on shooting two arrows at once? It would be once thing if his targets were stationary things, but his targets were sparrows that were flying in the sky!

Without waiting for people to get over their doubts, Zhao Jie's arrows had already been released and two sparrows fell straight down from the sky.

Zhao Jie didn't stop. He took out two more jin pu gu arrows from his quiver and shot down another two sparrows.

On the viewing platform, Wu Rong's emperor's mouth was gaping open in shock and amazement. It was one thing to shoot with unfailing accuracy was one arrow. It was too unbelievable to be accurate with two arrows. After all, Zhao Jie and the sparrows were constantly moving. Could this Prince Jing be supernatural creature? Even if Zhao Jie had defeated Wu Rong's army until they had to retreat little by little eight years ago, he was unexpectedly still this impressive eight years later! Wu Rong's emperor initially had ideas of defeating Zhao Jie, but those intentions in his mind



were now as dead as ashes. Zhao Jie's actions had thoroughly convinced him to give up.

For the last time, Zhao Jie placed three zhi jin pu arrows into his bow, aimed the arrows at three sparrows in the sky, and released the arrows.

A nearby place servant counted in a loud voice, "Thirty-five, thirty-six, thirty-seven!"

Wei Qi Zhen's face went through a myriad of colorful changes.

Without any doubt, Da Liang had won this round.

## Chapter 113.2

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Zhao Liuli was shaking from top to bottom from watching this scene. Her eyes were opened wide. She was afraid of missing even one tiny moment. Zhao Jie had reversed the undesirable situation and turned defeat into victory. She happily shook Wei Luo's arm and said, "My imperial brother is too amazing."

Wei Luo also thought that Zhao Jie was amazing, but it would be embarrassing to be too obvious about it. After all, Emperor Chong Zhen and Empress Chen were sitting right there. She should try to be more reserved.

But, she really felt that Zhao Jie was so valiant and so handsome. She really wanted to go over there and hug him. At the same time, there was a strong feeling of pride in her heart. He was her man. How could he not be amazing?

The old eunuch stood on the viewing platform and announced the results of the equestrian archery competition. First round's archery went to Da Liang, second round's horsemanship went to Wu Rong, and third round's equestrian archery went to Da Liang. In accordance to the rule of best two out of three, Da Liang was the winner in this competition.

Wu Rong's emperor accepted his loss, stood up, saluted Emperor Chong Zhen, and said, "As expected, Da Liang has many talented people in both scholarly and physical areas. Wu Rong's warriors will openly admit to defeat."

Emperor Chong Zhen said polite words with his mouth, but he couldn't hide the pride in his eyes.

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There was another reason why Wu Rong's people had come to Da Liang. It was for an alliance through marriage.

The partner for the marriage alliance would be fourth prince

Wan Qi Zhen. He was twenty-five years old this year. Although his home had countless concubines, there wasn't a legal wife. Wu Rong's emperor had originally asked Emperor Chong Zheng for sixth princess Zhao Liuli, but Empress Chen wasn't willing for Liuli to marry to such a far away place, so this matter had been set aside.

When Wu Rong's emperor mentioned this again, Empress Chen thought of Zhao Jie's words.

"Dan Yang's age is close to Wan Qi Zhen's. She's also the daughter of Duke Zhen's legal wife. She would be an appropriate marriage partner to Wu Rong's prince. If she continues to stay in the capital, she'll never walk out of the dead end. It'll be good if she marries someone from a far away place. Perhaps, after a long time passes, she'll be able to get over her current feelings."

Empress Chen reflected on Zhao Jie's words and thought it wasn't unreasonable.

If Gao Dan Yang stayed in the capital, she would constantly hear news about Zhao Jie and Wei Luo and the issue would weigh heavier and heavier in her mind. Perhaps, she might even fall into obsession and ruin her future. Empress Chen looked at Gao Dan Yang, who was sitting in a seat below her. She was wearing a pink and purple robe that had wide sleeves and was embroidered with white butterflies. Seeing that Gao Dan Yang was preoccupied with staring at the competition arena, Empress Chen silently sighed, looked away from her, and said to Emperor Chong Zhen, "Your Majesty, this empress has an idea..."

On the other side, after Wei Luo saw Zhao Jie leaving, she hesitated for a moment before finding an excuse to leaving the viewing platform.

She knew that it wouldn't be good for her to do this. It would make it seem like she missed him a lot... But, when Wei Luo thought it over, there was nothing shameful about her wanting to

see him.

With such a thought, her mind became more open-minded.

Wei Luo knew that Zhao Jie would probably go Bao Shu Hall to rest after leaving the training area. Bao Shu Hall was where he resided before he established his residence outside of the palace. After he moved out of the palace, he would only occasionally go there to rest for half an hour or so when he came to the palace.

Wei Luo had only gone there once when Zhao Jie had led her there when she was seven or eight years old. By now, she had already almost completely forgotten about it. She walked there using her memories. On both sides of the path, there were verdant and lush sequoia trees. They were so tall that they seemed to reach the clouds and covered most of the sky. The more she walked, the more secluded it felt. She seemed to have never walked on this path before.

Jin Lu was following behind her. She uneasily asked, "Miss, did we take the wrong path? This path doesn't look right."

She couldn't see any signs of a palace hall in front of them. Was Bao Shu Hall really in this direction? Jin Lu was very doubtful.

Wei Luo looked around and thought of the scenery from back then. She was positive that she hadn't taken the wrong path. "It's this way. Let's continue."

They didn't walk much further before coming to wide clearing. There was a moon gate at the end of the path. After they passed through the moon gate, they would see Bao Shu Hall.

Wei Luo sped up her steps. The moon gate was right in front of her. Just as she was to pass through it, she heard someone say, "Wait."

Wei Luo stopped and subconsciously looked in the direction of the voice.

Not far away from the foot of the wall, Wan Qi Zhen was

crookedly lying on a flat stone. His left sleeve was rolled up and his strong and powerful arm was exposed. Seeing that Wei Luo had stopped, he lifted his other hand to gesture at her and said, "Come here."

Why was his posture like he was teasing a dog?

Wei Luo definitely wouldn't go over there. Why did he appear here? What if it was a trap? If she went over there, someone might see and gossip about them. Not only would it ruin her reputation, she might even have to marry him and go to desolate Wu Rong.

She didn't want to live like a cow or sheep that was hidden in the long grass unless the wind was blowing.

Wei Luo pursed her lips, decided to ignore him, and continued walking towards the moon gate.

Wan Qi Zhen probably hadn't expected that would just she leave. Stunned, he struggled to sit up and said, "You... This prince has been poisoned!"

Wan Qi Zhen felt moody after having his dignity completely crushed by Zhao Jie at the recent equestrian archery competition. So, he left the competition arena to walk in this sequoia forest by himself. He didn't know that this place was near Zhao Jie's previous palace hall. After being stopped at the moon gate, he was sneak attacked by a yellow-striped snake. The snake wasn't poisonous and he squeezed it to death with one hand. Just as he was about to leave, he saw Wei Luo walking over here.

Zhao Jie had embarrassed him, so he would tease his little princess consort. What would Zhao Jie's expression be if he saw that his woman was with him? Besides, this young girl had an exquisitely beautiful appearance. It would be too much of a pity if he didn't tease her.

However, Wan Qi Zhen would have never expected that there would be a woman that would ignore him.

After hearing he was poisoned, Wei Luo didn't even slightly pause in her steps as if she couldn't see or hear him at all.

Coincidentally, Zhao Jie had finished changing into a navy blue robe embroidered with hornless golden dragons and walked out of the moon gate at this time. Wei Luo quickly walked forward. Without even greeting him, she dodged behind him.

The young girl grabbed the back of his clothing and only revealed a pair of dark eyes

Zhao Jie froze for a moment. Just as he was about to ask her why, he saw Wan Qi Zhen slowly getting up near the foot of the wall.

He narrowed his eyes. His dark eyes deepened.

## Chapter 114.1

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It was sensible of Wei Luo to choose to ignore Wan Qi Zhen. Although no one had lived in Bao Shu Hall for a while, there were eyes everywhere in the palace. Wu Rong had come to Da Liang with the intention of becoming allies through marriage. If a meddlesome person told Emperor Chong Zhen or Wu Rong's emperor that he or she had seen something between her and Wan Qi Zhen, then Wei Luo and Zhao Jie's marriage would most likely be affected.

Wan Qi Zhen didn't succeed this time. Wei Luo had completely ignored him. Even if someone wanted to make mischief, he or she wouldn't have an opening.

Zhao Jie looked at Wan Qi Zhen, who was at least ten feet away. Then, he looked the young girl behind himself.

Wei Luo pulled his sleeve, lifted up her small, fair face, and complained, "Big brother, he threatened me."

It was really exaggerating to say that it was threatening. Wan Qi Zhen's previous action wasn't threatening at all. It was clearly flirting.

He knew that she was Zhao Jie's Princesses Consort Jing and still acted rude and careless toward her. It really made people feel uncomfortable. Wei Luo heard that he had countless concubines in his residence. He was probably a man full of lust and half-hearted feelings. Flirting had probably become second nature to him. He wasn't a good person. So what if his appearance was attractive and he had outstanding talent? He was still scum.

Zhao Jie raised his hand and stroked her cheek. His movement was gentle as if he was holding an easily breakable treasure. He didn't say a word. When he turned to look at Wan Qi Zhen, his gaze change into a coldness that pierces the bones. He slowly asked, "Fourth prince, why did you appear here?"

Wan Qi Zhen had already stood up and put down his dark green embroidered sleeve. He disapprovingly lifted his lips and said, "This prince was leisurely walking around. What? Does this bother Prince Jing?"

His tone wasn't good. There was a hint of provocation.

It couldn't be blamed that his tone was nasty. Zhao Jie had snatched the public's favorable opinion from him and he had also suffered a blow from Wei Luo's actions. So, right now, he didn't have a pleasant expression when he saw Zhao Jie. Wu Rong's people cared a great deal about not losing face and were rather conceited. There were many narrow-minded people like Wan Qi Zhen.

Zhao Jie could easily guess why he was acting like this, but he didn't want to bicker like him. The outcome in the training area had already determined everything. It wasn't the style of a man and would be too petty for them to continue talking about it. He only said, "Ah Luo is this prince's fiancée. Fourth prince, please conduct yourself with dignity and retrain your natural disposition." As he said this, he tightened the cloak on Wei Luo's shoulders and covered her flower-like face. The cloak had a pattern of scattered lotus flowers with green stems and auspicious clouds. "My imperial father and your esteemed father have probably already finished discussing fourth prince's marriage. Fourth prince, are you not going to go over there to hear about the result?"

The implication was that he should be concerned about his own marriage instead of coming here to bother Wei Luo because he had nothing to do.

Although Wan Qi Zhen was angry, he hadn't lost his senses. It wouldn't be good for him to offend Zhao Jie while their two countries were currently working on alliance. He stood in place for a moment and his line of sight landed on the young and delicate girl behind Zhao Jie. Seeing that Zhao Jie's expression was sinking, he grinned. He placed his right hand on his chest to salute and



said, "Prince Jing disregard today's matter."

Then, he turned around and left.

He had lusted after his woman and he wanted him to disregard it? Zhao Jie's dark eyes coldly looked at Wan Qi Zhen's departing figure. A vicious light flashed through his eyes.

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Behind Bao Shun Hall's main entrance, both of Wei Luo's hands were pressed against Zhao Jie's fiery chest. He was holding her head with his hand and she had to lift her head up to accept his kisses. She wasn't tall to begin with and only reached his chest. Even if she stood on her tiptoes, she could only reach his chin with great difficulty. Imagine how very difficult this scene would look. But, she couldn't struggle free from him. Zhao Jie's other arm was wrapped around her slender waist. He tightly fastened her against his chest as if he was swallowing water without caring for his life after accidentally encountering a clear spring after he had travel three days and nights in the desert with his thirst at its peak.

All of the saliva in Wei Luo's mouth was sucked away by him. Her tongue felt numb and painful, but she still couldn't break free. She could only close her eyes and pitifully endure.

She didn't know why the situation had become like this. After Wan Qi Zhen left, Zhao Jie had Zhu Geng and Yang Hao stand outside to guard and he brought her here without saying a word. Then, his tall body covered her. Wei Luo vaguely knew that he was feeling jealous, but she absolutely hadn't done anything with Wan Qi Zhen. She didn't even say a single word to him. Why did he have to be angry?

Wei Luo felt that she was really pitiful like a piece of fat meat on a chopping block that was waiting to be slaughtered. She could only allow to Zhao Jie to rub and twist her as he wished. She never that there were so many different things that could be done between men and women to express intimacy. From top to bottom,

she felt as if her entire body had become Zhao Jie's. She softly whimpered. She couldn't control her trembling body that was in his hands.

She heard the sound of hurried footsteps outside of Bao Shu Hall's entrance. The sound was light. It was probably the footsteps of women.

As expected, she soon heard the sound of Zhao Liuli and Liang Yu Rong outside the entrance. Zhao Liuli asked Zhu Geng and Yang Hang, "Why are the two of you standing here? Have you seen Ah Luo?"

Jin Lu had already been ordered away by Zhao Jie. She was currently waiting somewhere else. After all, anyone could tell what was happening if a servant girl was standing outside an entrance without her young lady.

Wei Luo's mind became alert and the strength she used to push Zhao Jie away increased. But, at this time, her body was completely weak from his kisses. Even if she increased her strength, it would still be insignificant to Zhao Jie. Zhao Jie didn't let go of her, but his movements became significantly gentler and slower. He sucked on her cherry lips as if he was pledging that he wouldn't give up until he sucked away the last drop of her sweetness.

Zhu Geng's voice was naturally leveled as he calmly said, "To respond to Your Highness, this subordinate hasn't seen Miss Wei."

Zhao Liuli didn't seem like she believed him. She looked towards the hall and asked, "Why are the two of you standing out here? Where's my imperial brother?"

Zhu Geng said, "The prince is working on something inside and ordered us to wait at the entrance."

Wei Luo, who was being "worked on", felt bitter. Why was Zhao Jie not finished kissing her yet? Her tongue already felt painful

and her lips were definitely swollen. What would she do when she saw other people? But, she didn't dare to make a sound. If Zhao Liuli and Liang Yu Rong saw her like this, they would laugh at her for the rest of her life.

Thinking of this, she retaliated by biting Zhao Jie's lips.

After hearing Zhu Geng's words, even if Zhao Liuli felt suspicious, it wouldn't be good for her to continue asking. She regretfully glanced towards the hall. As she turned around and left with Liang Yu Rong, she said, "She's not here either. Where did Ah Luo go..."

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Zhao Jie pressed Wei Luo against the wall. One hand was pressed against the wall and the other hand was wrapped around her soft waist. He carefully bit her one more time before letting her go. Wei Luo was breathless from his kisses. Lacking strength, her body started to fall into his chest when he let her go. He agilely caught her. At this moment, she didn't even have energy to be angry at him. Her tongue felt numb and she could still smell his cool and refreshing wormwood-like scent.

Wei Luo pursed her lips and decided that she didn't want to kiss him again for at least three months. This had been too tiring. It felt as if half a year had passed. She looked up. Her cheeks were red and her limpid eyes held lovely tears. The faint, swirling ripples in her watery eyes would strike a person's heart and make him unable to resist wanting to fiercely kiss her.

Zhao Jie scratched her nose. After stealing kisses from the beauty, his complexion had significantly improved. "In the future, you can't go outside by yourself."

The corner of Wei Luo's mouth curved down. She just knew that Zhao Jie would start trying to control everything.

Sure enough, Zhao Jie continued to say, "You can't go to remote places and you can't approach unfamiliar men..." Actually, he wanted to say, all men. However, when he thought about it, that wouldn't be possible. And, he was worried that Wei Luo would react badly if he said those words, so he forced himself to loosen the restriction.

It was dangerous that the young girl was too attractive. People would even dare to have evil plans towards her in the palace. It would be even more dangerous in the public places where crooks mixed with honest people.

There would bound to be perverts and kidnappers. Every time

Wei Luo had left her home, Yang Hao and two other bodyguards would secretly follow her to guard her. But, even though Zhao Jie had her protected very carefully, he still couldn't help nagging. He wanted her to be more careful.

Wei Luo couldn't help defending herself, "I haven't approached unfamiliar men. Big brother, why would you say something like that? I'm going to be angry."

Zhao Jie also felt that his words were too harsh, but if he didn't say it this way, would she listen? He poked her forehead with his forefinger and middle finger. "Big brother is doing this for your own good."

It would better if he married her sooner. Zhao Jie felt slightly regretful about scheduling their wedding to occur in next year in October. After she entered Prince Jing's residence, he would reduce the number of times she would go outside. Even if she went outside, he would have to go with her. This was the only way he wouldn't worry.

Zhao Jie's chin was pressed against Wei Luo's forehead, as he considered speaking with Emperor Chong Zheng about moving up the wedding date.

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Three days after the equestrian archery competition, Wu Rong's emperor and Wan Qi Zhen said their farewells and prepared to leave.

The other person for the marriage alliance had been decided. It was Duke Zhen's legal wife's eldest daughter, Gao Dan Yang.

Regarding this matter, Wu Rong's emperor wasn't satisfied. No matter what, they should be bringing back a princess to marry instead of only a noble's daughter. Her identity was too poor compared to the imperial family. However, since it was already decided, there was nothing left to say. Wu Rong's emperor had

reluctantly nodded in agreement.

Gao Dan Yang was feeling even more wronged and unwilling.

Gao Dan Yang cried at home for a day and a night. She wasn't willing to be married off to a faraway place like Wu Rong. In the end, she even prepared white silk to hang herself. Fortunately, Duke Zhen's wife stopped her in time and she didn't succeed. The alliance marriage wasn't between two people or two families. If Gao Dan Yang really died, death would end all of her troubles, but the rest of Duke Zhen's family would suffer a calamity. Duke Zhen and his wife took turns trying to persuade her, but she still wouldn't agree. In the end, Empress Chen had to appear to repress her.

Gao Dan Yang asked Empress Chen if this was her intention. Empress Chen naturally admitted it. Gao Dan Yang's heart turned to ashes. For an entire night, she looked through her window as she cried. The next day, her only choice was to sit down in front of her mirror that had a pattern of four birds flying around the center with flowers to dress up in a wedding gown and put on makeup. She sat down on the Wu Rong's marriage sedan that followed a grand procession as they set out on a journey back to Wu Rong.

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When Wei Luo heard of this news, Gao Dan Yang had already followed Wu Rong's army out of the capital.

Wei Luo was currently in the verandah washing her hair. When she heard the news, the hand holding her hair loosened. Her abundant, jet-black hair fell onto her shoulders and made her palm-sized face seem even smaller. "Gao Dan Yang went to Wu Rong for the alliance marriage?"

Bai Lan brought over a pot of warm water, placed it on cedar stand, and earnestly nodded, "They're already several miles away."

Wei Luo had actually not known about this. This had happened

too quickly and this hadn't been mentioned among the young ladies yet. Most people had been trying to figure out if it would be sixth or seventh princess. No one would have guessed that Gao Dan Yang would have taken their place. Wei Luo returned to her senses. If she married to Wu Rong, she would never come back. Without any malicious intent, she thought this was good. This way there would be no one that was constantly thinking about Zhao Jie. Although she knew that Zhao Jie wasn't interested in Gao Dan Yang, her heart was more or less uncomfortable when Gao Dan Yang looked at Zhao Jie with a burning gaze.

Wei Luo felt very happy and swiftly finished washing her hair. The corner of her lips secretly curved up as she stood in the verandah and had Jin Lu dry her hair.

Today's weather was bright and sunny without clouds. It was a rarely seen weather in autumn.

Wei Luo had abundantly, long hair that would take a while to dry, so she had servants bring a small vermilion-lacquered teapoy inlaid with gold and carved with spirals to the verandah. While she tasted tea by herself, she enjoyed the sunlight.

An hour later, a servant girl wearing a green robe came into the courtyard, walked to Wei Luo's side, and said, "Miss, the steward from Prince Jing's residence is here. He's requesting that you go to an inn next to Xiu Chun.

Wei Luo paused in bring the teacup closer, tilted her head, and asked, "Why does he want me to go there?"

The servant girl shook her head to indicate that she didn't know.

Wei Luo felt doubtful. She hadn't married Zhao Jie yet. Why would Prince Jing's residence's steward be visiting her? Why did daddy let him into the residence?

After thinking about it, since Wei Kun had tacitly agreed, she decided to go over there with a few female servants after changing

her clothes. Wei Luo stepped into the carriage and she quickly arrived at the inn next to Xiu Chun. When she went inside a private room on the second floor, she saw that there were already people inside. One of the women wearing a brocaded red outer robe stepped forward, saluted, and said, "Miss Wei, since you're here, let's start your measurements."

Wei Luo doubtfully stood in place and saw servant girls that had originally been behind the woman surround her with measuring tape and a book. They lifted up her arms and started taking her measurements.

When Wei Luo returned to her senses, the woman was already measuring her chest. The measuring tape went around her small peaches. The woman announced a number and had a servant girl record it. Wei Luo finally started resisting and asked, "What's this for? Who asked you to come here?"

The woman ambiguously smiled, looked at her, and said, "What do you think? It's naturally to prepare Fourth Miss's wedding dress."



## Chapter 115.1

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Wei Luo felt somewhat awkward at the moment. Normally, a mother would prepare her daughter's wedding dress. Wei Luo didn't have a mother, so this task had fallen onto Fourth Aunt Qin-shi's shoulders. It would also be acceptable if she sewed the dress herself. But, looking at the current situation, it couldn't be that Zhao Jie was going to hire someone to make her wedding dress? Had he talked about this with her father? Did her father agree?

For a girl's wedding, the wedding dress was extremely important. The wedding guests would be able to tell if the stitching on the wedding dress was good or not in a single glance. This concerned her future dignity and reputation. She understood that Zhao Jie was being considerate of her. But, wasn't the scope of his care a little too... extensive. The soles for Wei Luo's wedding shoes were already half done being stitched. She had lost count the number of times she stabbed her fingers because of this. If it went like this, would those shoe soles not be used?

It was only now that Wei Luo understood why Prince Jing's residence's steward wanted her to come here. This inn was next door to the famous Xiu Chun. The clothes from Xiu Chun were famous in the capital. It was a store that had existed for over a hundred years and they usually only sold ready-made clothing. Every year, crowds of prestigious people with splendid family backgrounds would come to pre-order their limited supply of clothing.

However, Xiu Chun would accept only five orders for custom-made clothing for three days at the beginning of each year. After those orders were accepted, they would politely thank the rest of the visitors while declining to meet them and close their doors.

The rest of the time, even if people had money and wanted to order clothing to be specially made, they wouldn't be able to. Their ready-made clothing was also very extremely expensive. Even so,

they were people willing to go to their store to be ripped off by these prices.

The young ladies in the capital all thought it would be glorious to be able to wear clothing from Xiu Chun. Other people would envy to death whoever could obtain one piece of clothing from this place.

It was currently late autumn. There were still several months until the next New Year. Other people had definitely already purchased the fixed amount of five orders. How was Zhao Jie able to get the people from Xiu Chun to agree?

If Wei Luo could wear a wedding dress from Xiu Chun, it would not only increase House Wei's reputation, it would also show how much importance Prince Jing placed on Wei Luo, which would in turn make people value House Wei and Wei Luo even more. On behalf of Zhao Jie's meticulousness, Wei Luo wouldn't bother him about the half finished soles. At worst, she would make them into another pair of embroidered shoes.

When Wei Luo returned to her senses, the woman had already finished taking her measurements and was glancing at her chest as she implicitly asked, "Miss, are you still growing recently?"

Wei Luo's face subconsciously turned red and she almost reached her hands out to cover her growing chest. This woman didn't seem like she was asking if she had been growing taller. She was probably asking if her chest was still developing... The measurements for the wedding dress had to be fitted closely. Normally, at this time, a girl wouldn't grow taller, but her chest would still continue to grow. The wedding dress wouldn't be comfortable if the chest area was too tight.

Wei Luo's face was so red that it looked as if blood could drip from it. It was one thing for her to know this herself, but it was embarrassing to say it in a roomful of people. Fortunately, there were no men inside the room. Prince Jing's steward had already

left the room when they started taking measurements. "Recently, they're still growing..."

At fifteen year old, a girl's body would be blossoming. First, they had been like small, unopened lotus flowers. Now, they full enough to be held in a hand. Wei Luo almost suspected that it was because of Zhao Jie's rubbing... After all, before Zhao Jie had started touching them, her little peaches hadn't developed much.

After thinking too much about this, Wei Luo hurriedly to her senses and controlled her expression.

The woman from Xiu Chun was already accustomed and experienced with making clothes. Hearing her words, she knew what to do. Next year's October was less than a year away. She would make the wedding dress's chest area slightly bigger so that there would be sufficient space when the time came. The woman checked the recorded numbers. Seeing that there weren't any problems, she congratulated Wei Luo on her good fortunes and left.

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Suddenly, the group of people that had surrounded Wei Luo had disappeared and Wei Luo was the only one left in the private room.

She didn't know where the Prince Jing's steward had gone. Wei Luo's female servants were waiting for her downstairs. She walked to the doorway to look, then she went back inside the room to put on her veiled hat. Just as her hand touched the veiled hat on the vermilion-lacquered round table with carved lions, a hard body pressed against her back and whispered into her ear, "How about letting me see how much they've grown?"

Wei Luo was surprised, but fortunately her reaction was quick. She nimbly moved sideways to avoid him, so Zhao Jie's hand only touched empty space.

Wei Luo turned around to face him. She felt both shy and

indignant as she stared at him and asked, "Why are you here?"

When she asked this question, her eyes glanced at the door for a moment. The door was tightly closed. In addition, she really hadn't recently heard the sound of the door opening and closing. It couldn't be that Zhao Jie had been hidden in this room for this entire time, right? She thought of the words she has said to that woman during the measurement and connected them to the nonsensical words that Zhao Jie had just said. Wei Luo immediately understood his meaning. Her small face that blushed with both shame and anger was like the dewdrops that were seen in early spring mornings. It was cute, rosy, and bright.

Zhao Jie's expression was normal without the slightest shame. He lowered his eyes to look at this small, fuming girl. He pinched her cheek, laughed, and said, "This prince went through so much effort to invite people from Xiu Chun. It's fine that you don't appreciate it. Do you also have to be angry?"

Wei Luo hadn't guarded herself against him pinching her face. It didn't hurt, but she still intentionally said, "Why didn't you tell me this in advance? I wasn't prepared at all."

Zhao Jie looked at her and asked, "What did you have to prepare for? You just had to bring yourself here."

Wei Luo asked, "Have you talked about this matter with my daddy?"

Zhao Jie nodded. Otherwise, Wei Kun wouldn't have agreed to let her go outside.

Wei Luo said, "Oh." She blinked and in slightly complaining overtone, she said, "They even took measurements to make shoes... I was already half finished with reinforcing my wedding soles by sewing. It's such a waste."

Zhao Jie looked at her strangely. His lips slowly curved up into a smile as he asked, "My Ah Luo also knows how to reinforce soles?"

Of course, she knew how. Other than reading books and gardening at home, Wei Luo naturally couldn't skimp on learning needlework. Da Liang thought highly of women who were clever and dexterous. This meant that not only did a woman need to be intelligent and understand etiquette, her needlework skills couldn't be too lacking. A woman needed to be talented at needlework in order to be valued by her mother-in-law and sister-in-laws after she married into her husband's family. However, Wei Luo didn't like needlework and didn't practice often. This time, she had to repeatedly ask Fourth Aunt's advice on how to reinforce soles by sewing.

## Chapter 115.2

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Wei Luo glanced at him with an expression of "There's still a lot that you don't know."

Her round, almond-shaped eyes were naturally attractive. Even though it looked as if she was rebuking him, she was actually acting spoiled. When her eyes were tilted like that, it was as if her eyes had grown hooks that could take away a person's heart and soul.

Zhao Jie wrapped his hand around her waist, leaned over, and lightly kissed her. "Then, how about changing the pattern and making me a pair of shoes?"

Wei Luo opened and closed her small mouth. In heart, she thought that he really knew how to take advantage. It wasn't easy to make shoes. If it weren't because she wanted to marry him, she wouldn't even be willing to make her own shoes.

Zhao Jie saw the unwillingness on her face, hugged her more closely, rubbed his chin against her cheek, and asked, "Okay?"

Wei Luo shook her head, "Don't want to. It takes too much work to make shoes. Besides, the shoes I make don't look good either."

Zhao Jie laughed, "No matter how it looks, this prince will wear it every day."

Wei Luo looked at him in disbelief. He was a prince. Normally, his food, clothes, and other daily items were all very exquisite. Would he still be willing to wear it if she made him a pair of straw sandals? If Empress Chen saw that sight, she would probably think he was crazy.

Wei Luo wouldn't agree, so he vigorously rubbed against her cheek.

Zhao Jie didn't sleep last night because of the hidden stockpile of weaponry in Xu Zhou's southern mountain. Then, because of Wei

Luo's wedding dress, he contacted people from Xiu Chun this morning. He hadn't closed eyes until now and stubble had appeared on his chin. When it was rubbed against her face, it felt itchy and painful.

Wei Luo's face was as delicate as a peeled egg. How could she stand her face being rubbed like this? Wei Luo couldn't win against his strength or successfully avoid his chin. It hurt enough that tears appeared in her eyes. She said, "Fine, I'll make them for you... Stop rubbing. It really hurts."

Zhao Jie finally let her go and kissed her cheek once. "Darling is so obedient. In a few days, I'll have someone bring my shoe pattern to you. You just need to follow the pattern."

Wei Luo had been forced into giving in by him, so she was slightly unwilling to accept this. She blew out her cheeks, stood on her tiptoes, and bit down hard on his chin.

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An hour had passed before they started to leave the private room.

Wei Luo's face could barely be considered normal. The redness on her face had mostly faded, but her uneasiness could still be seen. In contrast, Zhao Jie, who was standing behind her, had a smiling expression on his face as if he had satisfied his appetite for the young girl. Even though they hadn't gone to the last step, he had still used his hands and mouth to personally measure the size of her small peaches.

Her completely crystal-like skin was pure white and perfect. When he touched her skin, it was slippery and smooth. The only problem was that it was too fragile and made a person worry about breaking her if he wasn't careful enough.

At this time, with a blushing face, Wei Luo didn't even call him "big brother" when she pointed at his nose and said, "Don't follow me."

Standing at the doorway, Zhao Jie smiled and obediently nodded.

Wei Luo didn't want other people to see that she had come out of the same room as Zhao Jie. She took a step out of the room first, looked around, and immediately jerked her foot back into the room.

At the other end, two people had come out of a private room and were walking towards the staircase. Wei Luo had seen them before they saw her.

It was a man and a woman. The man was wearing a moon white muslin robe with sweet flag plant pattern and golden embroidery. He looked to be about forty years old with a scholarly bearing. When he smiled, it felt like a cleansing spring breeze. The middle-aged woman was wearing a top that was embroidered with passion flowers in song style with a round collar, a satin skirt with lotus stem pattern, and a cloak with a red-crowned crane and cloud pattern and a satin collar. In all details, she looked elegant and graceful with a dignified aura. When these two people were standing together, they seemed like a husband and a wife. Even from far away, they gave off a sense of transcending worldliness.

Wei Luo stood in place behind the door. The shyness in her eyes had faded and only indifference was left behind.

Zhao Jie stroked her head. "Why did you come back?"

Wei Luo didn't say anything. A moment later, she walked out of the room again. The couple had already walked down the stairs and was heading towards the entrance.

The two of them looked intimate and natural as if they were an old couple that had lived together for many years.

Standing behind the railing, Wei Luo quietly looked at their departing figures with an expressionless face.

Zhao Jie noticed that something was wrong, followed her line of sight, and let out a quiet inquisitive sound.



Next to the entrance of the inn, Wei Kun started walking inside. It seemed that he had already known about this place. After he collided into the two people, he blankly looked at them. His gaze landed on the woman for a moment before he immediately stared at the man next to her. After he came to a realization, the pain in his eyes was so apparent that even Wei Luo could see it from the second floor.

Wei Kun had previously ordered people to investigate this palace and knew that she was living here. After hesitating for a long time, he finally couldn't control himself and came here to look.

Seeing her now, he wished that he hadn't come.

Wei Kun looked at the woman in front of him and couldn't say a complete sentence, "You... You came back."

The woman slightly stiffened. A long time later, she finally nodded.

Wei Kun didn't know where to put his hands. He had a thousand words that he wanted to say to her, but when the words went to his mouth, he didn't know which words he should say. Wei Kun's gaze settled on the man next to her. After hesitating for a long time, he mustered up his courage and asked, "This person is...?"

"He's my husband, Fu Xing Yun." The woman's voice wasn't loud, but there weren't many customers in the inn, so Wei Luo could clearly hear her words even from the second floor. The woman paused and continued, "We're married."

Wei Kun's body trembled and his face suddenly became deathly pale. A long time later, he was barely able to change his complexion back to normal. He wanted to squeeze out a smile, but even after pulling at the corners of his mouth, he wasn't able to.

Wei Kun felt that someone was looking at them from upstairs, so he lifted his head up look and met Wei Luo's frosty gaze. Surprised, he said, "Ah Luo..."

Hearing these words, the woman also turned her head around in surprise to look upstairs.

Wei Luo secretly clenched her fist.

Wei Luo had seen her face in the painted scroll in Wei Kun's study. Wei Luo had met her twice. Once it was outside of Yu He and the other time was in Ci Temple's main hall. Wei Luo recognized her at first sight. This person was her mother, Jiang Miao Lan.

# Chapter 116.1

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Although Wei Luo had recognized Jiang Miao Lan those two times, she didn't have any intention of acknowledging her.

During her childhood, Wei Luo had seen many interactions between mothers and daughters. There were warm, caring mothers that treated their children affectionately and strict mothers that scolded their children. There were also mothers that would alternate with looking at the children with anger and joy.... Regardless of type, these mothers couldn't hide the parental devotion and love in their eyes. That devotion and love could soften any person's heart. Even if a child had a hard heart, everything would become fine after a mother patted her child on the back in comfort or when a child acted cutely spoiled in his or her mother's arms.

There was one time when Wei Luo went over to Marquis Ping Yuan's residence to look for Liang Yu Rong, Marquis Ping Yuan's wife had been lecturing Liang Yu, who had gotten into trouble.

Marquis Ping Yuan's wife's stern expression and loud voice had scared Liang Yu Rong and Liang Yu into silence. Liang Yu was obediently and silently kneeling down in front of his mother. Later, Wei Luo found out that Liang Yu had momentarily been too naughty and had broken a jade accessory carved with birds of prey and peony flowers that his father had given his mother.

That jade accessory had great significance. Marquis Ping Yuan had given this to his wife as a love token when their engagement had been settled. Marquis Ping Yuan's wife had stored this item away in a deep place and rarely took it out. Liang Yu, this naughty child, who was curious about everything and wanted to take a look, had broken it with a moment of inattentiveness.

Marquis Ping Yuan's wife had punished him with kneeling in the ancestral hall and missing one day of meals. Liang Yu Rong didn't

dare to plead for forgiveness for her older brother, so she dragged Wei Luo along to secretly look at Liang Yu. Liang Yu's knees hurt from kneeling, but the more important thing was that his stomach ached terribly from hunger. Although Marquis Ping Yuan's wife was clearly very angry, she still tacitly agreed to allow Liang Yu Rong to secretly deliver food to Liang Yu. She even had her personal servant girl deliver a soft pillow to Liang Yu, so that he would be more comfortable while he was kneeling and to avoid injuring his knees.

At that time, Wei Luo was really envious of Liang Yu. He could be lectured by his mother and also be cared by her. Wei Luo didn't even know what her mother looked like.

Wei Luo had never told anyone about this feeling, not even Chang Hong.

Although fourth aunt Qin-shi was very caring towards Wei Luo, this type of care still wasn't the same as a mother's affection towards her own child. Qin-shi could lecture and punish her children as she wished and give them earnest and well-meaning advice. However, Qin-shi only treated Wei Luo with blind fondness. Wei Luo didn't want to think too deeply about this matter. The more she thought about this, the more resentment she would feel towards Jiang Miao Lan.

How could she heartlessly abandon her and Chang Hong?

Why wasn't she able to do any of things that other mothers were able to do?

Wei Luo even viciously wondered if Jiang Miao Lan knew about the terrible endings that had befallen her and Chang Hong in her past life. If she found out, what would her reaction be? Would she regret abandoning and not caring about her children?

Wei Luo would have preferred that she had stayed missing and never came back.

But, Jiang Miao Lan had still come back. Wei Luo had recognized her at Yu He's entrance on Mid-Autumn Festival. She had seen a person that had been surrounded by a halo gradually walking outside. She had the same appearance as the person in that painted scroll in Wei Kun's study. Several years had passed and her appearance had changed, but her temperament would never change.

Wei Luo hadn't deliberately avoided her. She just didn't want to see Jiang Miao Lan and admit that she still had a mother.

Approached by Wei Kun's gaze, Wei Luo walked downstairs from the second floor, stopped a few steps away from them, formed a smiling expression, and called out, "Daddy."

"Ah Luo, why are you here?" Wei Kun looked behind her. Zhao Jie had also walked downstairs and stopped behind Wei Luo. Wei Kun fixed his expression and saluted, "Greeting Your Highness Prince Jing, I behaved poorly."

Zhao Jie's expression didn't change much. He was always serious and cold in front of other people. "This prince requested someone to take measurements for Wei Luo's wedding dress and was just about to send her back home."

Wei Kun knew about this, so he said, "I troubled Your Highness."

Zhao Jie said, "Ah Luo is my fiancée. It's only normal for this prince to do this. Father-in-law, you don't have to think too much about this."

After these words were said, Jiang Miao Lan looked at Zhao Jie in surprise.

Although Jiang Miao Lan had already been in the capital for several days, she had intentionally avoided hearing news about House Wei. She was afraid that it would stir up sad memories. She was also worried that if she heard news about her children, she wouldn't be able to resist missing her children even more.

She only found out that Wei Luo was already engaged when she heard Zhao Jie calling Wei Kun "father-in-law".

Jiang Miao Lan looked at the handsome and refined man in front of her. He had a pair of profound and deep eyes that looked like the night sky filled with stars. Moreover, when he spoke, he considerately stood next to Wei Luo with a protective posture. He probably cared about Wei Luo a lot.

For a moment, a thousand thoughts flashed through Jiang Miao Lan's mind. They weren't good.

Wei Luo really disliked this type of atmosphere. She didn't want to continue staying here. "Daddy, since you have something you want to discuss with other people, I won't stay any longer. I'll go back home first." Then, she lifted up her dark green skirt to depart.

## Chapter 116.2

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Wei Luo's luck wasn't very good. Just as she reached the entrance, it started raining when the weather had been perfectly good a few moments ago. The rain became heavier and heavier. Drop after drop successively landed on the ground in front of Wei Luo. Wei Luo's eyebrows twisted and she took a step back.

A thunderstorm had erupted outside of the inn. The cold wind mixed with raindrops blew onto Wei Luo. She lifted up a handkerchief to wipe her face. In a short moment, the entranceway was filled with water. Her bright and limpid eyes were overflowing with the reflection of water. Without waiting for Jin Lu, who was in the carriage across from her, to bring her an umbrella, Wei Luo lifted up her skirt, stepped into a puddle, and walked in the direction of the carriage.

Zhao Jie immediately took off his black cloak embroidered with golden thread and covered Wei Luo's head, then he pulled her back inside. "It's raining so heavily. There's no reason to leave right this second. It won't be too late if you wait for your servant girl to bring your umbrella over. I'm worried that you'll get sick from the chilly rain."

A long time later, Wei Luo's voice came out from underneath the cloak, "I don't want to stay here."

Zhao Jie held her hand, "This prince can send you back."

Wei Luo wasn't married to Zhao Jie yet and it wasn't appropriate for him to do this. But, of the people here, who had the energy to care about this?

A moment later, Jin Lu came over while holding an opened oilpaper umbrella with a hibiscus pattern. Wei Luo walked underneath the umbrella with Zhao Jie's cloak draped over her shoulders.

"Sweetie!" A voice suddenly called out from behind them.

Wei Luo stopped walking, but she didn't turn around.

Jiang Miao Lan arrived at the inn's entrance. Holding the doorframe, she looked at Wei Luo with an anxious expression.

Wei Luo turned her head and said to Jin Lu, "Let's go. When I came out, I didn't say anything to paternal grandmother. She'll worry if I don't go back to soon."

Jin Lu nodded, lifted Wei Luo's skirt, "Miss, be careful while walking."

The heavy rain poured down and smashed underfoot. A moment later, their shoes and socks were splashed wet, even their skirts became wet.

Wei Luo continued walking forward. She heard hurried footsteps behind her. Before she reached the carriage, Jiang Miao Lan arrived in front of her.

Wei Luo's eyes were calm as she motionlessly looked at Jiang Miao Lan. She didn't know why she had chased her over here. Wei Luo coldly asked, "Madam, were you calling me before?"

Jiang Miao Lan was stabbed by the indifference in Wei Luo's eyes. The falling rain fell down from the umbrella and formed a curtain around Wei Luo. Jiang Miao Lan had to take a step forward to clearly see Wei Luo's face. "Sweetie, I'm..."

Wei Luo tilted her head and interrupted her words, "I don't want to know."

Jiang Miao Lan's stretched out hand stopped in mid-air. She felt helpless and embarrassed.

At this moment, Jiang Miao Lan realized that Wei Luo had already known. She had treated her so apathetically because she already knew. Raindrops fell into Jiang Miao Lan's eyes. The various emotions she had been feeling in her heart changed into



mist that rushed up into her eyes. Crying, she asked, "Sweetie, do you hate me?"

If it weren't raining so heavily, who knows how many people would have seen this scene? However, at this time, there were only a few people on the street and they passed by them in a hurry without pay any attention.

Wei Luo's expression didn't change. "Madam, you recognized the wrong person. I don't know you."

Then, Wei Luo didn't continue looking at her. She stepped onto the carriage pedal to enter the black-lacquered, flat-roof carriage.

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However, in the moment when Wei Luo bent over to enter the carriage, Jiao Miao Lan shouted while crying, "I'm your mother!"

Wei Luo finally stopped. She straightened, turned around, and looked at the soaked woman outside of the carriage. Wei Luo stared at her for such a long time that Jiang Miao Lan thought time had frozen. Occupying the higher ground, Wei Luo slowly asked, "What did you say?"

"Sweetie, I'm your mother." Jiang Miao Lan repeated while she sobbing.

Wei Luo heard her words clearly and her mind also became more alert. Her voice was even colder than before as she said, "My mother died a long time ago. I don't have a mother."

Jiang Miao Lan's face became deathly pale.

"When I was a child, there was a time when I was very sick. When other children were sick, they all had a mother by their side to take care of them, but I only had servant girls and a governess. Chang Hong and daddy would also frequently come over to keep me company and coax me into drinking medicine." Wei Luo's

words seemed very nonsensical. She looked directly at Jiang Miao Lan's eyes as she said the following words, "From that time, I knew that I only had a father and young brother. I don't have a mother."

Jiang Miao Lan's body tilted and she almost fell down onto the ground.

This time, Wei Luo heartlessly entered the carriage and ordered the carriage driver, "Go back to Duke Ying's residence."

The carriage drove away and quickly disappeared into the rain.

Fu Xing Yun walked forward, took off his outer robe, draped it over Jiang Miao Lan, and gathered it over her shoulders. "Your health isn't good to begin with. You'll get sick if you stay out here in the rain."

Jiang Miao Lan's heart ached. There was nothing more painful and hopeless than being hated by your own daughter. Her face was full of tears. She kept repeating, "Sweetie hates me. She hates me... But, I miss her and Chang Hong so much. There hasn't been a single day when I wasn't missing them."

Fu Xing Yin led her back to the inn, asked the waiter to bring a dry cloth, gently wiped the water from her face and hair, and comfortingly said, "You have to give her time to think things through. You haven't seen each other in several years. There's no need to rush into things right now."

After two of them said these words, they noticed that Wei Kun and Zhao Jie hadn't left yet.

At some point, the inn's customers had left. They were the only four people left in the lobby. Zhao Jie was sitting at a square table. Without saying a word, he was turning the cup in his hand with an attitude of thinking things through.

In contrast, when Wei Kun heard the conversation between Jiang Miao Lan and Fu Xing Yun, there was a painful and complicated expression on his face. He stared at Jiang Miao Lan

and asked, "Why is your health bad?"

Jiang Miao Lan finished wiping away the rainwater on her face and lowered her eyes. A long time later, she said, "I injured my body when I gave birth to sweetie and Chang Hong back then. I won't be able to have another child for the rest of my life."

# Chapter 117.1

---

Jiang Miao Lan originally wasn't meant to be a person in this world. But, since she had come here, she should forget everything about the past and stay here to continue living.

Jiang Miao Lan had met Wei Kun during Mid-Autumn Festival. On that day, she was guessing the riddle underneath a colorful lantern. At that time, his key strength was his scholarly knowledge. He could correctly guess ten riddles in a single breath without being wrong. As Wei Kun was passing through the streets, he saw half of her face from the side and became foolish. The surrounding multi-colored lanterns illuminated her face.

Her almond eyes were as bright as lustrous gems. Her nose was elegant and her eyes were mysterious. Her flower-like lips were slightly curved upwards. Her entire body was bursting forth with the radiance of excitement. What made Wei Kun feel even more unexpected was that her clothing was very shabby as if she was wearing someone else's clothing. It wasn't fitting at all. There was even an obvious mended patch on one of the sleeves. Compared to the magnificently dressed young ladies that were at the Lantern Festival, Jiang Miao Lan's appearance could be considered poor. However, this didn't seem to have the slightest affect on her.

She won the lanterns one after another until she could barely hold them with her hands. It made the surrounding gifted scholars and beautiful ladies cast sidelong glances at her.

Jiang Miao Lan was in high spirits. She pointed towards a colored lantern on her left side and said, "In the green cluster, there is a little bit of red, xu fei ge, guess a type of medicinal herb."

"I guess its cinnabar (硃砂). Am I right?"

(T/N: Xu fei ge means its a riddle where the answer is a word that's consist of two Chinese characters that share the same radical (the symbol on the left of each character).

The stall owner was both happy and depressed. The expression on his face was rich and colorful. "Correct. But... could you move to another place? You've already taken all of the lanterns from my place. It's not fun for everyone else..."

Jiang Miao Lan took the eight-treasure style rabbit lantern from the stall owner, smiled, nodded, and left.

During the Lantern Festival, there were places to guess riddles everywhere. As she continued walking down the street, Jiang Miao Lan easily won more than a dozen colorful lanterns. She cleverly sold the colorful lanterns to the nearby servant girls of young ladies from wealthy families. The money she earned from this would be enough for her to live off of for many days.

Like a ghost, Wei Kun followed her as she walked. When she walked to the entrance of a tunnel, Jiang Miao Lan turned around without any warning and readily caught him.

Wei Kun rubbed his nose and asked, "I saw that you were very skilled at guessing riddles. Would you be willing to go to the teahouse down the street with me?"

Just like this, this was how the two of them met.

After Wei Kun found out that Jiang Miao Lan orphan, he was very caring towards her and even purchased a residence for her without his parents' knowledge. When Wei Kun had free time, he would go over there to see her. It was only then that he discovered she was an exquisite and elegant girl when she wasn't wearing her shabby clothing. During that night on the Lantern Festival, he had only seen a glimpse of her dirty face. So, he had only thought she was good-looking. He hadn't expected that she would be as sparkling and clear as a lustrous gem.

Jiang Miao Lan always had many bizarre ideas. For example, playing poker, making perfume from various flower petals, and fermenting grape wine... Jiang Miao Lan had a lovely voice. She would sing songs that Wei Kun had never heard of. She was sweet,

agreeable, and unique. She made people feel intoxicated. From Wei Kun's point of view, Jiang Miao Lan was a treasure. A treasure that was able to do anything.

After the two of them knew each other for a year, Wei Kun couldn't resist confessing to his family. He told Duke Ying and Old Madam that he wanted to marry an orphan without any family background.

Later, things happened as mentioned before. Duke Ying and his wife didn't agree, so Wei Kun kneeled outside of their doors for three days and three nights until they were forced to agree.

After Jiang Miao Lan married into his family, Old Madam Luo-shi didn't care for her. However, for the sake of Wei Kun, Luo-shi didn't make things too difficult for Jiang Miao Lan. Luo-shi just rarely spoke to Jiang Miao Lan when she came to pay respect and wish her good health every morning.

Three months after their wedding, Jiang Miao Lan became pregnant.

Wei Kun was wild with joy and treated her with increasing attentiveness.

The first three months were good. The married couple loved and cherished each other. They seemed like they were stuck together by glue. They were so affection with each other that other people would blush when looking at them.

However, Luo-shi still didn't like this daughter-in-law and wanted to find another woman to serve Wei Kun while Jiang Miao Lan was pregnant. That woman was Count Zhong Yi's family's Du Yue Ying.

Although Du Yue Ying was born from Count Zhong Yi's family's side branch, the circumstances of her birth weren't good. Her father was concubine-born, so it wouldn't be wronging her to make her into Wei Kun's concubine.

Luo-shi had also privately asked Du Yue Ying for her opinion. Du Yue Ying's blushing face and lowered head showed that she tacitly agreed.

However, when Old Madam mentioned this to Wei Kun, he refused to agree, so this matter came to nothing.

After October, Jiang Miao Lan gave birth to fraternal twins. The son and daughter were healthy. However, she almost died because she had lost too much blood while giving birth. On that day, Wei Kun was taking highest level imperial civil examination. He only had time to briefly look before leaving to take the examination.

As a result, Wei Kun made a mistake that wasn't like him. When the results came out, Wei Kun didn't pass.

During that time, Wei Kun was in low spirits. After hearing that Jiang Miao Lan's body was weak, he thought it wouldn't be good to infect her with his moodiness, so he moved to his study. When Wei Kun visited Jiang Miao Lan, most of the time he was seeing her sleeping appearance. Even if she wasn't sleeping, Jiang Miao Lan wasn't in the mood to talk. Her mind was focused on their two newly born children.

During this period, one of Wei Kun's classmates and close friend suddenly died. His death was a heavy blow to Wei Kun. Wei Kun became fond of drinking. He would often go to the lake pavilion in the back of the residence to drown his sorrows by drinking by himself.

So, when Du Yu Ying came to Duke Ying's residence with Count Zhong Yi's wife for Wei Chang Hong and Wei Luo's one-month-old birthday, she saw Wei Kun's depressed appearance.

At the time, Du Yue Ying was still very clever and knew that she should act out her plan starting from Wei Kun. She kept him company while he was depressed. She praised, encouraged, and comforted him. Although Wei Kun felt very thankful towards Du Yue Ying, he still maintained some distance between them and

didn't overstep the bounds of what was proper.

Du Yue Ying stayed at Duke Ying's residence for a month under the excuse of accompanying Old Madam.

This was the period of time that Jiang Miao Lan was recuperating, but there was something wrong with her body. Her health became worse and worse. At the end, she couldn't even get out of bed. Wei Kun would take out two hours each day to keep her company. Jiang Miao Lan knew that he was busy studying for the next examination, so she didn't ask him to stay for long. Usually, she would ask him to leave after an hour.

Until one day, when he was walking around the courtyard with Jiang Miao Lan on a day that she was feeling slightly better, they met Du Yue Ying at the lakeside. Du Yue Ying accidentally stepped on a stone and her body started falling backwards.

Without even thinking, Wei Kun let go of Jiang Miao Lan's hand to support Du Yue Ying.

This was the first time that Jiang Miao Lan met Du Yue Ying.



## Chapter 117.2

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Once you noticed someone, you would find traces of her everywhere in your life.

For example, Jiang Miao Lan's servant girl, Gui Xiang, said that Du Yue Ying would frequently go inside Wei Kun's study to bring him tea and snacks. She would also occasionally bring her own writings to ask Wei Kun for advice. All of these things were acquiesced by Duke Ying and his wife. Old Madam wasn't satisfied with Jiang Miao Lan's background to begin with. She wanted to find someone for Wei Kun that could help him. Someone from Count Zhong Yi's family wouldn't be bad.

After hearing this, Jiang Miao Lan's face became even paler. She called Wei Kun over to ask if these things really happened. Wei Kun shook his head to deny. He held her hand and solemnly promised, "Lan-er, you're the only person that I want in my life."

Jiang Miao Lan chose to believe him.

She believed Wei Kun until she heard him say to Du Yue Ying in the verandah after he left her room, "Why are you here? Your health isn't good either. Didn't you feel cold a few days ago? The illness in Lan-er's room is too heavy. I'm worried that you'll get sick. You should go back."

Inside her room, Jiang Miao clenched the bed sheets underneath her. She couldn't describe the feeling in her heart. She always thought she was special in Wei Kun's heart. Now, she realized this wasn't true. He was equally gentle, patient, and magnanimous towards everyone. Just like the way he was treating Du Yue Ying right now.

She believed that one day, Du Yue Ying would come into her room, bashfully place her hands on her stomach, and say, "Older sister, I'm pregnant with Fifth Master's child."

Lightning will strike the guilty.

Jiang Miao Lan closed her eyes. She looked peaceful, but her heart already had a knife twisted through it.

She didn't want to believe the words she imagined. She wanted to clearly ask Wei Kun, but Wei Kun didn't return home that night. Jiang Miao Lan had Gui Xiang find out where he went. She said Wei Kun left the residence to socialize with schoolmates.

On the next day, Jiang Miao Lan was greatly ill. People from the first and second branch came to see her. At that time, Third Master Wei Chang wasn't married yet. Everyone in House Wei clearly knew the person that Wei Chang longed for. Fifth Madam was as fair as a flower and the moon. Fifth Master wasn't the only one person who had fallen in love with her. Third Master had also fallen in love with her at first sight. Unfortunately for him, Fifth Madam and Fifth Master were deeply in love. There wasn't any space for Third Master.

Seeing Jiang Miao Lan like this, Wei Chang waited until everyone had left to walk to her beside. With red eyes, he asked, "Why have you become so thin? Are the servants treating you harshly?"

Jiang Miao Lan weakly said, "Thank you Third Brother-in-law, I'm well."

Wei Chang looked at her without saying a word.

A long time, Jiang Miao Lan was the first one to speak. But, she asked about something else, "Yesterday... did anyone in the residence call for a doctor?"

Wei Chang naturally knew the question that she wanted to ask.

Wei Chang thought of the schemes that Du Yue Ying and his fiancée, Liu-shi were capable of. She was capable of doing anything that would drive away this woman that she found threatening. But, for some reason, he didn't tell Jiang Miao Lan this. Instead, he

directly said, "Du-shi is pregnant. The child is fifth brother's."

Jiang Miao Lan finally lost the last of her strength to support herself. She felt as if she had been hollowed out. Her mind was empty without any thoughts. Sitting on the bed, she closed her eyes. The past two months had used up all of her strength. She felt withered and as if she had reached a dead end. If it wasn't for her two children, she might not even have lasted until now.

When Wei Kun entered the room, he saw Jiang Miao Lan crying and Wei Chang sitting on the bed and helping her wipe her tears.

Seeing that she was on the same bed as his brother, Wei Kun's eyes sunk. He walked forward. This person used to be his dear brother. Because of a woman, they had fallen out.

This was probably the straw that broke the camel's back.

In a raging temper, Wei Kun quarreled with Jiang Miao Lan and said many ugly words. Later, he didn't even remember the words that he had said. He only remembered that Jiang Miao Lan's face was as white as paper. He couldn't see anger in her eyes. There was only defeat.

Then after that, Wei Kun couldn't see Jiang Miao Lan anymore.

She left without bringing anything. She waited until nighttime and left with her servant girl, Gui Xiang. That night, if the room didn't have a lingering medicinal smell, Wei Kun would think that everything that happened during this period was a dream. Jiang Miao Lan was gone. Their two children were gone...

Children!

Suddenly remembering something, Wei Kun hurriedly ran over to the next room. He saw children lying in their swaddling clothes. Their faces looked identical. One was awake and the other was sleeping. Wei Luo looked at him with her dark eyes. Her tender and white fist was clenched. She completely didn't know what had happened. She even giggled when she saw him.

Wei Kun kneeled down next to the cradle. He couldn't resist bitterly crying.

He didn't know the exact reason why Jiang Miao Lan left and he thought he would never know the actual truth. Wei Kun had only treated Du Yue Ying as Jiang Miao Lan when he was drunken one day. He had hugged her and said a few words.

As for the pregnancy, it was utter nonsense. Even if Wei Kun had done something with her, it wouldn't be possible for her to become pregnant so quickly. It was only because Jiang Miao Lan thought that they had started a relationship earlier so she believed Du-shi's words. Du-shi and Liu-shi's original purpose was to force Jiang Miao Lan to die. Now, Jiang Miao Lan had left. But, where could a woman go? If she didn't die on the streets, then she would be reduced to going to the red light district. Either way, their goal had been achieved.

Wei Kun was kept in the dark. At the time, he wanted to explain everything to Jiang Miao Lan when he came back home, but then he saw how close she was with Wei Chang and thought of the affection that Wei Chang felt for her. He was temporarily overwhelmed by jealousy and lost his senses to uneasiness and anger. So, he said words that he shouldn't have.

However, it was true that Wei Kun had touched Du Yue Ying. Even if they didn't go to the last step, he had harmed a young woman's reputation. He didn't have another choice. He had to marry Du-shi after coming back to the capital. He couldn't find Jiang Miao Lan and his heart that had turned to ashes.

No matter how much affinity you felt for another person, you couldn't escape fate.

This was why House Wei would tell outsiders that Jiang Miao Lan had died of sickness. After all, it would have been scandalous to say that they had lost a daughter-in-law in this sort of way.

When Jiang Miao Lan left Duke Ying's residence, she originally

thought she wouldn't live for long. She hadn't expected that she would meet Fu Xing Yun.

Fu Xing Yun saved her life with his skilled medical knowledge.

However, she had injured her body when giving birth and didn't receive sufficient medical treatment for too long. She had lost the ability to become pregnant a long time ago.

Jiang Miao Lan had been gone for so many years. From the beginning, she had known that Wei Luo and Chang Hong wouldn't recognize her. She had also prepared herself for this outcome. But seeing Wei Luo today, she couldn't resist the impulse from her heart. Even if Wei Luo didn't recognize her, she still wanted to tell Wei Luo that she was her mother.

Jiang Miao Lan looked at Wei Kun, who was sitting at the table, "... I heard that you married Du Yue Ying. Have you been well?

Wei Kun covered his face. He couldn't speak.

No one could see the expression he had on his face. They could only see that his body was trembling as he let out a painful sound.

# Chapter 118.1

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Shortly after Wei Luo returned home, someone delivered Zhao Jie's shoe pattern.

The servant girl, who delivered the item to her, was a tea-serving servant that had recently entered the residence. She was about twelve to thirteen years old with a delicate appearance. She was wearing a yellow jacket and green ru qun skirt. Her brightly smiling face was very lovable. "This servant is called Yue Li. Fourth Miss, if you have any orders in the future, please directly summon this servant."

Wei Luo hadn't expected that Zhao Jie would be so brazen. He had actually planted one of his people in Duke Ying's residence. To put it bluntly, this Yue Li would be used a messenger for them. If there was something she wanted to say to Zhao Jie, she could mention it to Yue Li. His courage was really big! Wasn't he afraid that Duke Ying's people would discover her?

Fortunately, there weren't many people in her room at this time. There was only Jin Lu and Bai Lan. Other people didn't dare to casually enter her room. Wei Luo stared at shoe pattern on the small, vermillion-lacquered table carved with spirals and outlined with gold. Her face could still be considered calm as she said. "I understand. You can leave." In actuality, she was already wishing that she could poke Zhao Jie's face with a needle. She had given him an inch and he wanted a mile.

After Yue Li left, Bai Lan hastily closed the door, walked back to Wei Luo's side, and said, "Miss, why did His Highness Prince Jing give you this? That girl..."

Jin Lu's mind was cleverer. She interrupted Bai Lan's words, "That girl doesn't seem simple. She's probably reliable."

Wei Luo treated the shoe pattern as Zhao Jie and glared at it for a moment. Then, she said to Jin Lu and Bai Lan, "I promised him

that I would make him a pair of shoes. Put this thing away. You're not allowed to tell anyone else about today's matter."

Jin Lu and Bai Lan were both people who understood appropriate behavior. They wouldn't casually gossip with other people. Moreover, Wei Luo and Zhao Jie were already engaged. It wasn't overstepping the bounds of what was proper for Wei Luo to make shoes for her fiancé. It would be okay even if other people found out. The outrageous thing was that Zhao Jie had secretly planted a spy in Duke Ying's residence. This was really watching Wei Luo too closely.

It wasn't surprising that Wei Luo was feeling unhappy.

If she were to ever find out that Zhao Jie had Yang Hao closely follow and watch over her, she would definitely have a falling out with Zhao Jie.

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It was still raining outside, but it wasn't as heavy as before when they had just returned home. The raindrops dripped and dropped onto the window frame and splashed onto the back of her hand. Outside in the courtyard, patches of water accumulated next to the pine trees and inverted their images. It was difficult to tell if reality was real or fake. There wasn't any movement in the main room. Wei Kun hadn't returned yet. Otherwise, there would have been a servant going forward to bring an umbrella to meet him at the entrance of Pine Courtyard.

Jin Lu stepped forward. As she closed the window, she said in concern, "Miss, you were wet from the rain when you came back. It would be better if you take a warm bath to drive away the chillness. Otherwise, you might be sick the next day."

Wei Luo nodded after she finished drinking a cup of red date and ginger tea.

A few drops of osmanthus essential oil made by Han-shi were

added to the bath barrel. The scent was simple and elegant. After Wei Luo finished bathing, her entire body was faintly scented in sweet-smelling osmanthus. She put on a bluish green outer robe with Su style embroidery that consisted of clouds and grapes and a decorative lace border. Her dense, wet black hair was draped behind her back. Sitting on a couch that was facing the southern window, she casually asked, "Has my daddy returned?"

Jin Lu walked forward, gathered her hair, and gently used a double-edged fine-toothed comb to brush her hair until it was tangle-free. "To respond to Miss, Master returned shortly after you started your bath."

Wei Kun's face didn't look good when he returned. It looked gloomier than the weather outside. The servants in Pine Courtyard had never seen him like this and they didn't know why he was angry. The servants serving him were all trembling with fear and didn't dare to make the slightest mistake.

Jin Lu quietly glanced at Wei Luo. She couldn't hold back her curiosity and asked, "Miss, the person on the street from before..."

Jin Lu had heard the conversation between Wei Luo and Jiang Miao Lan. The words, "Sweetie, I'm your mother." had greatly shocked her and Bai Lan. But, seeing that Wei Luo wasn't willing to talk about this, the two of them didn't dare to ask questions at the time. They restrained their feelings and only guessed in their minds.

Right now, Wei Luo's expression had eased a lot, so Jin Lu dared to bring this topic up again.

Wei Luo hugged her knees with her chin resting on a knee. She stared at the outside scenery through the window and lazily said, "Don't ask too many questions. Just do your work."

Knowing that she had overstepped her authority, Jin Lu hastily said, "Understand. This servant has said too much."



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A moment later, something happened in the main room. Wei Kun called Third Master Wei Chang to the main room. Their exact words were unknown, but she could vaguely hear Wei Kun's angry voice.

After Wei Luo's hair was dried, she got up from the couch, put on shoes embroidered with white flowers and decorated with pearls, and walked outside. Standing outside, she coincidentally heard Wei Kun's voice coming out from the main room's windows. "Why did you say those words to her? Why did you lie to her?!"

The servants standing outside the doorway deeply buried their heads. Their bodies were stretched taut. Under this atmosphere, they didn't to make any sounds.

Wei Luo leaned against the gates that were craved with birds of prey. Her head was slightly tilted back and her tired drooping fan-like eyelashes cast half circles shadows on her white jade face. When she raised her head again, she saw Wei Chang Hong walking towards her. He was wearing a woven sapphire robe with an auspicious cloud pattern. He asked, "Who's daddy arguing with? Why is he so angry?"

She thought that Chang Hong had probably also heard something and this was why he had especially returned from Mister Qi's place earlier than usual.

Wei Luo look up and slowly said, "Daddy is speaking with Third Uncle." She tilted her head to look at Chang Hong, blinked, and asked, "For daddy to become this angry, who else could it be?"

Chang Hong furrowed his eyebrows. He figured something out from Wei Luo's words.

## Chapter 118.2

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Holding a gilded ivory dagger in his hand, Wei Kun cut off a corner from the black table carved with lotus flowers and had curved edges, and unflinchingly said, "Just like this table, let's make a firm resolution to break off our relationship. We're no longer brothers!"

Not long after, Wei Chang expressionlessly left the main room. He looked calm, but he was clenching his teeth so hard that it looked like blood would come out.

Wei Luo and Wei Chang Hong silently watched this scene. They didn't know if they should try to persuade or wait and see.

Wei Kun's anger obviously hadn't disappeared. He ordered people to bring Du-shi over from Ginkgo Courtyard. Du-shi hadn't left that courtyard for many years. Now, she furtively looked around Duke Ying's residence with each step she took. Everything had become completely unfamiliar and no longer looked the same as before. Du-shi was wearing a grey outer robe that had been discolored from repeated washings. Step by step, she followed the servants. She made the mistake of meeting Wei Luo Luo's eyes in the verandah and hastily looked away. Her previous confidence and dignity was already gone. She couldn't even compare to a woman from an ordinary family.

Du-shi originally didn't know why Wei Kun had called her over here. She held hope that Wei Kun found his conscience and was going to let her out of Ginkgo Courtyard. However, a single sentence from Wei Kun's dispelled all of her joy. She asked, "What did you say?"

Wei Kun had made up his mind from the beginning. At the moment, he didn't even want to look at her. He repeated, "Have someone bring me a brush and ink. I'm going to divorce you."

Divorcing a wife wasn't a trivial matter in Da Liang. If a woman

was divorced and had to go back to her parents' home, her entire life was ruined. It would not only humiliate her parents' family, it would also adversely affect all of the unmarried girls in her parents' family. Moreover, the woman wouldn't have good days after she went back home. At Du-shi's current age, it would be impossible for her to remarry. She would only be a great aunt. As time passed, her parents' family would only become more fed up with her.

In addition, after Du-shi returned to her parents' home, she would no longer have the chance to see Wei Chang Mi. Wei Chang Mi was fourth branch's young master. He wouldn't be going to Count Zhong Yi's residence with her. If Du-shi stayed in Duke Ying's residence, she would still have a chance to see Wei Chang Mi every month. If Wei Kun divorced her, then wouldn't be able to see Wei Chang Mi for the rest of her life.

So, it wasn't surprising that Du-shi would have this reaction.

However, Wei Kun was determined to divorce her. He picked up a brush and wrote the two words on a paper, "Divorce Letter". Then, he started to write that Du-shi had "a vicious heart and was treacherous and resentful towards good-hearted people". Of the seven allowable reasons to divorce a wife, this was the most serious offense. It seemed that Wei Kun didn't have any intentions of keeping any sentiment and feelings between them at this point or cared about the relationship between their two families. He only wanted to punish Du-shi, this wicked person, to vent the hatred in his heart.

Du-shi looked at Wei Kun with a deathly pale face. After he finished writing the divorce letter, she hopelessly shook her head, "Wei Kun, don't..."

Wei Kun placed the divorce letter inside his lapel and walked out of the main room. "I'm going to the front courtyard to speak with mother and have Count Zhong Yi's people bring you back home."

Du-shi returned to her senses, ran after him, and said, "Then, give me back Mi-er. Let me take him with me!"

Wei Kun didn't turn around as he said, "Mi-er is Fourth Sister-in-law's son. I'm not Fourth Sister-in-law's master."

Du-shi mournfully said, "Mi-er is mine. I gave birth to him in October. Wei Kun, stand still!"

Wei Kun walked farther away and said to the servant boy next to him, "Watch Du-shi. Don't let her go anywhere."

The servant boy nodded, turned around, and ordered the other servants. Two servants immediately stopped Du-shi and brought her back inside.

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Pine Courtyard finally returned to calmness. The sky cleared after the rain and the courtyard became extremely quiet.

After Wei Luo finished watching the good play, she rubbed her eyes and said, "Chang Hong, guess who I saw today."

Wei Chang Hong was standing next to her. He had long grown into the appearance of a young man with splendid future prospects. In a calm tone, he asked, "Jiang Miao Lan?"

Surprised, Wei Luo turned her head to look at him with an expression of "How did you know?"

"I saw her when we went to Ci Temple last time. You were inside the main hall requesting protective charms and I was waiting outside." Wei Chang Hong had also seen Jiang Miao Lan's portrait. Although Wei Kun tried to hide the painted scroll from them, he took it out too often. It wouldn't have been possible for other people to not see. When Wei Chang Hong saw Jiang Miao Lan for the first time, he only looked at her blankly. He had originally only thought she looked similar to the painting. But today, after Wei Luo deliberately asked him that question and combined with Wei Kun's reaction, it wasn't difficult to guess what had happened.

"Will she come back to this household? Have you talked to her?"

Wei Luo flattened her mouth. With a voice that seemed as if they were discussing the weather, she said, "She's already married. She probably won't return." She blinked, smiled, and asked Chang Hong, "Chang Hong, do you want a mother? Do you want her to come back?"

Wei Chang Hong lightly said, "I thought about it when I was younger. But now, I don't need one."

Wei Luo faintly smiled, "Me too."

Jiang Miao Lan didn't appear when Wei Luo was sold by Du-shi or when Wei Luo died in her previous life. She didn't appear when Li Song and Li Xiang jointly destroyed Chang Hong's future prospects. So, there was no need for her appear in the future.

Cotton-padded jackets in summer. Palm-leaf fans in winter. A mother's belated love. All of these things were unnecessary.

On the same day, two things happened in Duke Ying's residence. One matter was that Fifth Master divorced Du-shi and people from Count Zhong Yi's residence came to pick up Du-shi. The other matter was that Third Master sent Third Madam off to a temple. He said it was so that Liu-shi could mediate and pray to Buddha. However, everyone in the residence knew that Third Master had separated his heart from Third Madam and could no longer live with her. If he wasn't concerned about Ya-er not being married yet and looking after her future marriage prospects, Wei Chang might have also divorced his wife.

After Du-shi and Liu-shi were sent away, Duke Ying's residence finally became quieter and more peaceful.

The weather became colder and colder and gradually became winter.

It was early morning. Wei Luo had a red stain cloak embroidered with peony flowers and lined with fox fur draped over her

shoulders. Standing barefoot on a fine woolen rug, she pushed open the window and saw that the courtyard was covered in a layer of white. It was the first snowfall of the year.

Jin Lu opened the door and came inside. Seeing that Wei Luo was barefoot, she hurriedly fussed over nothing, "Miss, why aren't you wearing shoes? The ground is very cold. It won't be good if you're too cold."

Wei Luo tilted her head and revealed a bright smile. "There are so many braziers burning in the room. How can I feel cold? It actually feels too warm."

Even so, Jin Lu was still worried. She helped Wei Luo to the couch facing the southern window and knelt down to put on embroidered satin shoes for Wei Luo. When she looked up, she inadvertently saw that shoe pattern. She couldn't resist jokingly saying, "It's been so long. Miss, have you only finished the soles? His Highness Prince Jing probably won't be able to wear new shoes until next year's spring."

Wei Luo picked up the soles and looked at them. She deliberately said, "I was planning on giving him shoes in spring to begin with. I don't know how to make thick, winter shoes. I'm afraid that I'll have poked a hole into my fingers by the time I finish."

Jin Lu burst out in laughter. She knew that her Miss was extremely delicate. If His Highness Prince Jing knew that her Miss had stabbed herself several times to make him a pair of shoes, he would probably feel heartache.

## Chapter 119

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After the snow fell, the entire capital was covered in a layer of white as if it had changed clothes. The capital went from bottomless red dust to a world of bright, ceramic glass. As far as the eye can see, the rooftops were covered in a vast expanse of white from the accumulated layers of snow. Wrapped in the silver and white snow, everything was sparkling and translucent.

Wei Luo led Bai Lan to the back to sweep the snowflakes that were on the plum flowers in the garden. This snow had a taste that was sweeter and fresher than spring water and could be used to make tea. Wei Luo held a dou cai tuan hua wen (a type of round, porcelain bowl with a colorful flower pattern) as she walked between the plum trees. As she carefully collected the snowflakes on the plum flowers, she listened to Bai Lan talk endlessly without getting to the point, "First Madam found the doctor called Fu Xing Yun. She's extremely happy. Early in the morning, she had Doctor Fu come to the residence to see First Young Master's leg...."

Wei Luo's stopped moving. She thought of the words that Jiang Miao Lan had said in the inn that was next to Xiu Chun. She had said she was married to a person called Fu Xing Yun. This was probably the person that First Aunt had asked to come here. But, she didn't know if First Aunt had found Fu Xing Yun herself or if Jiang Miao Lan had asked him to come here on behalf of her past relationship with House Wei. Regardless of the reason, it would be good if Fu Xing Yun could treat oldest cousin's leg. Wei Luo looked at Bai Lan, "What did Doctor Fu say? Is oldest cousin's leg treatable?"

She still remembered the words that Qian Temple's abbot had said. Fu Xing Yin was the only person in the world that could treat Wei Chang Yin's leg.

In high spirits, Bai Lan said, "I heard that after Doctor Fu went to Banyan Tree Courtyard, saw First Young Master's leg, and said one

word, First Madam almost cried.”

Wei Luo curiously asked, "Oh, what was the word that he said?"

Until Wei Luo pinched her cheek, Bai Lan deliberately withheld the climax of the story. Then, Bai Lan smilingly said, “Treatable.”

Wei Luo let out a sigh in relief. This was wonderful. Since it was treatable, then it meant that oldest cousin and Liang Yu Rong's predestinated fate could be saved. At the very least, Wei Chang Yin's leg wouldn't be the reason why this fated couple would be forcibly separated in this lifetime.

Bai Lan pulled away the branches that were in front of Wei Luo and drew out the words she heard, "Doctor Fu also said that since First Young Master's leg had been injured for so long, it won't be easy from him to treat it. He'll need several types of medicine and he'll also have to go to Tian Chan Mountain's hot spring villa as part of the medical treatment. This is the only way that he can fully recuperate."

However, Tian Chan Mountain was hundred of miles away from the capital and it's paths were rugged and steep. To get to the hot spring villa, it wouldn't be easy. But, other hot springs' medicinal properties weren't as good as the ones in Tian Chan Mountain's. For Wei Chang Yin's injury, First Madam would try this method no matter what.

Wei Luo used the flower-pattern bowl to catch the snow that fell from the plum flowers. "When are First Aunt and oldest cousin planning on leaving?"

Bai Lan didn't know the answer for this. "They'll probably leave in a few days. First Madam seems very anxious... Miss, you weren't there to see it. That Doctor Fu only used a few needles to prick First Young Master's leg and First Young Master was able to feel his leg again. Isn't that amazing?"

Wei Luo let out a burst of laughter. No matter how good Fu Xing



Yun's medical abilities were, she didn't believe it would be that exaggerated. "You say it like you personally saw it."

Bai Lan pouted, "I heard this from Xing Gu. She's one of Banyan Tree Courtyard's servant girls."

Either way, Wei Luo's mood was pretty good. She looked at the flower-pattern bowl to see that she had collected enough snow from the plum blossoms. She smiled at Bai Lan and said, "Let's go. I'll treat you guys to tea made by me."

Wei Luo's tea skills were pretty good. She had been learning this from Han-shi since she was a child. The tea brewed by Wei Luo had a light, delicate flower-like fragrance. However, a person wouldn't be able to say what specific flower it was. Anyways, it's sweet, simple, and elegant fragrance would remain in a person's mouth and was very suitable for girls to drink.

Bai Lan immediately became happier. She attentively held the flower-pattern bowl for Wei Luo. Over the past several years, she had become livelier and livelier and also said more words. "Miss, I heard that that hot springs in Tian Chan Mountain can also nourish the skin and increase attractiveness by making your skin brighter and smoother. It'll also benefit your body. Do you want to go there?"

Wei Luo thought for a moment, "It would naturally be good to go there, but would daddy agree? In addition, we don't know if First Aunt will be able to get in touch with the people from that villa." After all, there wasn't a girl that could resist the temptation of hot springs. Moreover, it was winter right now. There was nothing more satisfying than looking at the snow while soaking in hot springs.

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By the first day of the lunar year, First Master Wei Min was able to get in touch with the people from the hot springs villa. The other party was willing to vacate the villa for three months so that

Wei Chang Yin could go there to treat his leg. That villa was one of Prince Jing Zhao Jie's properties. Because of this matter, Wei Min had gone over to Zhao Jie's place to request this favor. Originally, he thought Zhao Jie would make things difficult for him for a time. Unexpectedly, Zhao Jie actually easily agreed.

As a result, Wei Min greatly changed his perspective of Zhao Jie. It seemed that he wasn't as unreasonable as other people have said.

Wei Luo didn't know about this matter. She only knew that it would be possible for her to go pass the winter at Tian Chan Mountain. She immediately led Bai Lan with her as she went to ask Wei Kun. Wei Kun nodded and agreed that she could go. Wei Luo also had Jin Lu go to Marquis Ping Yuan's residence to invited Liang Yu Rong along the trip. Anyways, the villa was big enough. It wouldn't be a problem for another person to stay there.

In addition to Wei Luo, the people from second and fourth branch, including Wei Bao Shan, would also be going. Bustling with noise and excitement, the family proceeded to go to Tian Chan Mountain.

On the way to Tian Chan Mountain, there was snow on the roads, so the carriages didn't travel quickly and it took several days to get to there.

After the carriages arrived at the bottom of Tian Chan Mountain, it took them half a day to reach the hot spring villa at the top of the mountain. The sky was already dark by the time they arrived and First Madam assigned everyone his or her rooms. Everyone was exhausted from riding in the carriages for the past several days, so the group of people prepared to sleep after dinner.

Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong's rooms were next to each other. The two rooms shared a cleansing room. The cleansing room was built around a hot spring.

Steam was currently rising from the hot spring. It was very tempting. The bath was surrounded by white marble. In the center

of bathhouse pool, there was even a lotus flower sculpture. Because of warm air, there were droplets of water on its petals. It looked like a real flower.

At this time, the thing that Wei Luo wanted to do the most wasn't to sleep. It was to have a long soak in the hot spring pool. It would get rid of her body's weariness and make her sleep even sweeter.

Liang Yu Rong had already hurriedly washed her face, rinsed her mouth, and went to sleep. Wei Luo had Jin Lu prepare a set of sleeping clothes and hanged it on the divider that had a traditional painting of beautiful women. Then, she said, "If you two are tired, you can go rest. I'll go to sleep after my bath. You've been working hard these past days. You can take the rest of the night off."

Jin Lu and Bai Lan refused to go rest at first, but seeing that Wei Luo wasn't joking, they gratefully thanked her, "Thank you Miss for your understanding."

She knew that the two of them were truly exhausted. If even the masters were tired, then the servant girls would be even more fatigued.

Wei Luo took off her clothes and casually placed them on a nearby couch. In the moment that she stepped into the hot spring, she was so comfortable that she let out a sigh.

The warm water covered her entire body. Moreover, this was a living, flowing spring instead of stagnant water. The hot spring's water flowed around her body. The slow flow of water was like a gentle pair of hands pressing against her body and stroking it from top to bottom. Wei Luo immediately felt that the hardship of riding in the carriage for the past several days was worth it.

Wei Luo leaned against the pool's white marble side and took out the hairpins in her hair. Her silky black hair fell down like a waterfall into the water and became aquatic grass. Her hair was black and shining. A single glance would show that her hair was painstakingly maintained unlike other girls. Other girls put on

makeup and dressed themselves magnificently, but had withered and yellowing hair that adversely affected their beauty. Wei Luo paid great attention to every aspect of her body and maintained every area beautifully. In addition, Wei Luo learned about essential creams and lotions for conditioning hair and skin from Han-shi when she was a child. This was how she developed into a beauty with snow-like skin and a body as delicate as flowers.

Wei Luo picked up a small porcelain bottle with a magnolia flower pattern that was next to the pool, poured out a few drops of transparent essential oil onto her palm, warmed it between her hands, and massaged it into her neck and arms. This essential oil could make her skin whiter and softer. In addition to having a beautiful face, a beauty couldn't overlook the requirement of a snow-white neck and lotus-like arms.

After comfortably soaking in the pool, Wei Luo's face turned red from warm steam. She lazily leaned her upper body against the white marble tiles and let out a pleasurable moan. She thought she heard the sound of footsteps behind her. She thought it was Bai Lan or Jin Lu, so she asked, "Didn't I tell you to rest? Why did you come here again?"

No one replied.

Wei Luo blinked. Realizing that something was wrong, she hurriedly retreated into the water, then she turned around to look.

# Chapter 120.1

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Wei Luo furrowed her eyebrows and asked in a stern voice, "Who's there?"

If it were Jin Lu or Bai Lan, their footsteps would be lighter. Moreover, they would call out her name before stepping closer. They wouldn't act so sneakily. It also couldn't be Liang Yu Rong. Wei Luo knew that once Liang Yu Rong was asleep, even thunder wouldn't be able to wake her up. This person's footsteps were steady. It was neither too fast nor too slow. If Wei Luo's ears weren't sensitive, she wouldn't have heard this sound.

Could there be someone else on this mountain other than the members of House Wei? Who else would have the freedom to be here?

Wei Luo stared at the red sandalwood divider that had a traditional painting of beautiful women in the cleansing room.

A shadow of a male figure appeared on the divider. The man stopped behind the divider and didn't continue walking forward. His voice was slightly hoarse, "It's me."

Wei Luo immediately froze in surprise.

Tian Chan Mountain was hundred of miles away from the capital. How did Zhao Jie come here? How did he know she was here and break into her cleansing room?

Wei Luo felt both shy and angry. She covered her chest and shouted, "Get out!"

There was a long pause before Zhao Jie said, "I'll just wait for you over here. Ah Luo, come out after you finish your bath."

Wei Luo stared at the divider with red eyes. She had never met such a shameless person. If he was standing there, how could she come out to put on her clothes? In addition, her clothes were hanging on the divider. The paintings of the beautiful women

couldn't entirely block the views from each side. She would be exposing the silhouette of her figure to him. She wasn't that thick-skinned. Wei Luo bit her lip, "Turn around."

Zhao Jie knew that he was moving forward too quickly and acting impudently. He obediently turned around. Actually, he wasn't thinking about doing anything outrageous. He just wanted to see her and talk with her. He hadn't expected that her alertness would be so high. She had immediately notice something was wrong just as he reached the back of the divider.

Although Zhao Jie had turned around, he could still hear the sounds behind himself.

When Wei Luo stood up from the water, there was the sound of falling water. The water drops slid down from her body like a winding stream in a valley that passed through peaks and ravines before loudly falling onto the polished white marble floor. Wei Luo felt apprehension because Zhao Jie was here. As she quickly put on her clothes, the golden chains on the dudou collided against each other

However, she was used to Jin Lu and Bai Lan helping her put on her clothes. As she became more anxious, her fingers became clumsier. Wei Luo fastened her peach-colored dudou embroidered with lotus flowers, then she covered herself with a magnolia-colored thin robe. Because the mountain temperature was cold, she also put on a pink outer robe embroidered with orchids. But, for some reason, no matter how many times she tried, she couldn't tie up the thin, inner robe.

She was so anxious that her pink lips were pressed tighter together. Her limpid, almond eyes started to become red and her hands were faintly trembling as her grip on the clothes tightened.

Zhao Jie waited for a long time behind the divider. He resisted turning his head around as he asked, "Ah Luo, are you done?"

Wei Luo murmured, "Not yet."

Zhao Jie realized her distress from those two words, "Do you not know how to put on your clothes?"

Separated by the divider, Wei Luo fiercely glared at Zhao Jie for a moment. What kind of words were these? How could he say those words so naturally? Did he think she was that stupid? Unfortunately, there was no way for Wei Luo to refute. Tightening her hold on the light silk belt, she said, "Tell Jin Lu or Bai Lan to come over here."

There was a trace of a smile on Zhao Jie's lips. "If the two of them came inside, then this prince won't be able to talk with you." This was a refusal.

Wei Luo didn't reply.

Looking forward, Zhao Jie said. "I can come inside to help you if you don't object."

Wei Luo lowered her head and looked at her clothes. Other than her thin, gauzy robe not being fastened, it was fine everywhere else, so she didn't refuse.

In a few steps, Zhao Jie walked past the divider and saw the young girl behind it. He stopped walking. His dark eyes became deeper. Wei Luo had recently come out of the bath. Her small cheeks were pink and lustrous from the steam. She looked as if she was faintly blushing. Her almond eyes were a glistening black as if a dense layer of mist covered them. Clearly, she was tempting people, yet her gaze looked innocent. It made people want to steal away her innocence even more.

Looking down, although her clothes were properly hanging on her body, her collar had slightly slid down during the processing of putting on clothes and the nape of her neck and the top of her chest was showing. Drops of water dripped down from her chin and slowly slid down into her dudou. She had just finished taking a bath and didn't have a time to dry off, so her clothes had become wet and clung to her body. The wet clothes outlined her exquisite

and lovely body. The sight was more alluring than if she wasn't wearing clothes.

Wei Luo probably didn't know how enticing her current appearance was. Otherwise, she wouldn't have easily let Zhao Jie come inside.

Zhao Jie took a deep breath before walking forward to look. Very quickly, he figured out what was wrong. "Silly girl, you're wearing the clothes inside out."

Wei Luo lowered her head, carefully looked, and suddenly saw the light. "I knew there had to be a reason why I couldn't tie the belt correctly..." The thin, gauzy robe was inside out, so of course the silk belt would also be in the wrong position. No wonder, she couldn't fasten the belt correctly. On a normal day, she would have definitely figured this out by herself. But, she didn't notice because she was feeling too shy and anxious because Zhao Jie was here.

Zhao Jie smiled as he looked at her, "Take off your robe so you can put it on again on the right side."

Wei Luo blushed. She pushed him towards the outside. "I know what to do now. I'll do it by myself. You should go outside."

She hadn't even settled the score of him breaking into her room!



## Chapter 120.2

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Zhao Jie laughed and showed a sad expression. "A little fellow called me inside when she needed me and started pushing me out as soon as she didn't need me anymore. I really don't have any significance in her heart."

Wei Luo puffed out her cheeks. "I didn't tell you to come inside. You were the one that came inside on your own."

Wei Luo saw that he wasn't moving, stamped her feet, and asked, "Why aren't you leaving?"

Zhao Jie looked at her, "I want to help you put on your clothes."

Wei Luo's face became redder than the rouge on the painted women on the divider. She hadn't heard such blatant words in two lifetimes. She mumbled to herself, "Big brother is truly shameless."

Seeing that she seemed to have softened her stance, Zhao Jie walked one step forward, raised his hands, and said, "Big brother promises to only help you with your clothes. I won't do anything else."

Later, the facts proved that it would be better to believe in ghosts than Zhao Jie's words.

At first, Zhao Jie really was very honest when her outer robe was taken off. But, after her thin, gauzy robe was also taken off, his eyes became strange. Zhao Jie looked at the delicately pretty body below him and tried to resist his body's impulse. He helped her put on the thin, gauzy robe, then he crouched down to tie her silk belt. Afterwards, he stood up, wrapped her in his arms, and murmured into her ear, "Ah Luo, you smell so good."

Wei Luo, "..."

Zhao Jie slowly added, "I really want you."

Wei Luo struggled in his arms. His scalding palms were snugly

holding the back of her waist. They could slide down at any moment. She subconsciously wanted to avoid Zhao Jie's hands and even moved forward to get away. As a result, she was even more inseparably close to cuddling Zhao Jie's chest. Utterly discomfited, she said, "Let go of me."

Zhao Jie didn't let go of her. He bit down on her earlobe and licked it while holding it in his mouth. "After we get married, let me help you put on your clothes every day."

Wei Luo repeatedly shook her head, "No way. I have servants to help me."

How could she let him help her put on clothes? She felt shameful just imagining that scene.

Zhao Jie tilted his head to look at this easily embarrassed girl, laughed, and said, "Won't it fine if you just dismiss them to do something else?"

Just as Wei Luo was about to refuse, she suddenly thought of something, and started laughing. "Does big brother want to be my husband or my servant girl?"

Zhao Jie stared at her, "What did you call me?"

Wei Luo froze for a moment. When she could react again, she turned her blushing face away from him.

Zhao Jie lifted up her sharp, little chin. With his eyes fixed on her, he asked, "Ah Luo, what did you just call me?"

Wei Luo stepped on his foot, struggled free from his arms, and vanished like a wisp of smoke from the cleansing room. "You misheard. I didn't say anything!"

Zhao Jie stretched his hand out to catch her, but she had run away too quickly. Her silky, black hair slipped through his hands and only left behind a strong sense of loss. Zhao Jie looked at her figure that had already run far away. A short while later, he dropped his head and laughed out loud in delight.

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Snow had recently fallen on Tian Chan Mountain during the day. The brilliant white snow covered the entire mountain. The moonlight shone on the snow and reflected a silvery, white light. Sitting on the roof, the resplendent starry sky seemed right above their heads and could be reached with a single hand.

Wei Luo was very tired. She just wanted to burrow into her quilts and have a good night's sleep, but Zhao Jie wouldn't let her sleep. He insisted on bringing her to the roof. Wei Luo was starting to suspect that he was addicted to doing this type of thing. After all, this wasn't the first time.

She curled up closer to Zhao Jie's chest and drowsily yawned. "Older brother Prince Jing, why are you here?"

Zhao Jie was holding her waist with one hand and gently massaging her head with the other hand. "I bought this villa a while ago to treat Liuli's illness. Your oldest uncle personally asked this prince and there wasn't a reason for this prince to not agree."

Wei Luo widened her eyes, "Did you know I would also come?"

Zhao Jie pecked her lips in praise. "How could my Ah Luo not come to such a good place like this one?"

As expected, Wei Luo knew that he didn't have good intentions. She firmly twisted the hand that was around her waist. "You still can't peep at me when I'm bathing..."

Zhao Jie couldn't help laughing and said, "I stood outside for a while and didn't hear any sound coming from inside. I thought you had already fallen asleep, so I went inside to look." He pressed his lips against hers and slowly rubbed. "Besides, this prince is your husband. What's wrong with me looking?"

Zhao Jie's waist was very hard. She couldn't pinch him no matter how hard she tried. It only tired out her hand. Wei Luo stared at him so hard that her eyes turned round, "Not yet!"

Zhao Jie thought for a moment. It was exactly because he wasn't her husband yet that he didn't rush inside without regard for anything. If he was, did this little fellow think she would be able to safely escape? Of course, he could only think about these words. If he said these words out loud, Wei Luo would be easily angered again.

Zhao Jie took off his black stain cloak lined with fox fur and wrapped it around Wei Luo's body. She had just finished taking a bath and her hair wasn't dry yet. He was worried that she would get sick from sitting out here in the cold. A short time later, he jumped down from the roof while holding her and returned to the hall.

Zhao Jie placed Wei Luo down on the red sandalwood bed decoratively carved with auspicious clouds. Seeing that she was already serenely sleeping with her long eyelashes swept down, he curved his lips. She looked as exquisite as porcelain doll. He pulled up the nearby bedding embroidered with blossoming red flowers to cover her body and kissed her forehead before turning around and leaving the room.

## Chapter 121.1

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When Wei Luo woke up the next day, there was no one next to her.

After Wei Luo ate breakfast, Jin Lu handed her a light yellow cloisonné bowl that was decorated with a brightly colored orchid pattern and filled with tea. She rinsed her mouth with the longjing green tea that had mint leaves added to it. Her expression was slightly perplexed. Did Zhao Jie really come last night? Or, had that just been a dream?

Yesterday, Wei Luo had been too sleepy. She only remembered that Zhao Jie had carried her up to the roof in his arms at the end. She didn't remember what happened after that. She turned her head and looked at the bed. The thin, gauzy robe she had just changed out of was still on the bed. It was the robe that Zhao Jie had helped her put on. It seemed that it wasn't a dream. Zhao Jie really had come here. She just didn't know when he had left or if he was still in the villa....

Wei Luo was slightly preoccupied with her thoughts and she didn't return to her senses until Jin Lu called her. She blinked and asked, "Jin Lu, you've been fidgeting in front of me since early morning. Is there something you want to say to me?"

Jin Lu nodded, "Miss, today is the day that Doctor Fu will be treating First Young Master's leg. The women in the other branches have already gone there to show their support. Do you want to go over there to look too?"

Wei Luo thought for a moment before saying, "Okay, it'll be good to go over there to look. Go over to Yu Rong's room to ask her to come too."

Jin Lu replied, "Understood."

Then, Wei Luo changed into a pomegranate red wu lu robe with

a flowering stem pattern. A moon white muslin dress was worn underneath the robe. It was too cold outside, so she also wore a bright red cloak that that was lined with fox fur and had silk lacing. As she was putting on a pair of turquoise earrings in front of a bronze mirror, Liang Yu Rong came inside, followed by Jin Lu.

Liang Yu Rong was even more afraid of the cold than Wei Luo. Today, she was wearing a yellow moon jacket with a lotus pattern and a pleated skirt. Not only was she covered by a cloak, she was also wearing a sable hat and holding a copper hand warmer. Her entire body was tightly covered as if she was afraid that other people didn't know how cold she was. Looking at how Liang Yu Rong was dressed, Wei Luo couldn't help teasing her, "If I didn't know better, I would think you're going to spend winter in Chang Bai Mountain."

(T/N: Chang Bai Mountain is the tallest mountain in Northeast Asia. It's considered a "Holy Mountain" and the birthplace many national myths.)

Chang Bai Mountain was an extremely bitterly cold place. During the winter, it would snow so heavily that the passages into the mountain would be sealed. It was impossible for most people to survive in that place. Wei Luo was only joking that Liang Yu Rong was dressed too excessively.

Liang Yu Rong immediately raised an eyebrow, "You're actually mocking me? I'm just sensitive to the cold. I haven't been to such a high altitude place in the past."

The conversation moved onto Wei Luo's clothing. The two young girls cheerfully quarreled with each other. The servant girls knew that they weren't actually angry, so they didn't step forward to stop them and only stood by and watched them with smiles.

Suddenly, Liang Yu Rong stopped talking and pointed at the red mark on Wei Luo's clavicle, "Ah Luo, what's that?"

Wei Luo blinked in surprise, "What?"

She was puzzled until Liang Yu Rong showed her the mark using a small bronze mirror. Zhao Jie had left behind a red mark on her clavicle last night from sucking. It still hadn't fade. Other people usually couldn't easily see this spot. But when the two of them were previously tussling, Liang Yu Rong had accidentally grab Wei Luo's clothes, which caused this current scene.

Fortunately, Wei Luo quickly thought of an excuse. In her mind, she wanted to fiercely bite Zhao Jie, but her expression was calm as she said, "Oh, there are many bugs on the mountain. When I was bathing in the hot spring last night, a small bug bit me. It's not big deal."

Liang Yu Rong didn't overthink. Worried that this "bug" bite would inflame the skin, she especially had her personal servant girl go to her room to bring back a bottle of anti-inflammation ointment and told Wei Luo to apply it on her skin every day to avoid the potential for scarring.

Wei Luo didn't refused and thanked Liang Yu Rong for her kind intention.

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First Madam and Wei Chang Yin were staying at the villa's Jin Ji Courtyard. The source of the hot springs was in the northeastern corner of Jin Ji Courtyard. It was the most effective spot to soak in for treating injuries and general health benefits.

Just as Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong saw Jin Ji Courtyard's central room, they happened to see First Madam and the other womenfolk sending a man off at the doorway. When they walked closer, Wei Luo saw that the man was Zhao Jie. Zhao Jie was wearing a navy blue robe with an auspicious cloud pattern and a lotus-shaped crown. A white jade dragon hairpin held up his hair. That jade hairpin was the one that had Wei Luo had given him.

Zhao Jie's demeanor looked impressive with a sense of propriety and his noble bearing looked effortless. He seemed like a

completely different person than the one who had peeped at Wei Luo when she was bathing last night. Zhao Jie's eyes were looking down as he was talking with First Madam.

As First Madam was sending him off, she tearfully thanked him, "It's really all thanks to Your Highness Prince Jing. If it wasn't you, than my child's leg..."

Zhao Jie said, "It wasn't much. Madam doesn't need to keep saying thank you."

First Madam took out her silk handkerchief to wipe her tears. She knew that if she continued like this, Zhao Jie would find this bothersome, so she stopped herself. "Your Highness, would you like to see Chang Yin? Doctor Fu is currently treating his leg. You're his benefactor, he definitely wants to personally thank you."

Zhao Jie thought for a moment, then he said, "Then I'll have to bother Madam to bring me there."

Zhao Jie looked up and saw two girls standing in the verandah across from him. Wei Luo's line of sight collided with his. She hurriedly looked away. She hadn't expected that Zhao Jie would be here. For a moment, she didn't know if she should step forward or back.

Men and women should maintain their distance. Even if Wei Luo and Zhao Jie were engaged, they should still stay away from each other, especially before the wedding. However, Zhao Jie and First Madam were already walking over here. It wouldn't be very appropriate if she turned around and left.... Wei Luo lowered her eyes and waited for Zhao Jie and First Madam to come closer, then she called out, "First Aunt," and didn't say another word.

Contrary to expectations, Liang Yu Rong was the one that saluted and said, "Greetings Your Highness Prince Jing."



## Chapter 121.2

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First Madam knew that girls were thin-skinned, so she didn't put Wei Luo in a difficult spot. Instead, she smilingly helped Wei Luo out by saying, "Ah Luo, you here. Mi-er has been looking for you everywhere. That child really likes to bother you. How about you go over to main room to see him?"

Wei Luo nodded, took a small black box outline in gold from Jin Lu, and brought it over to First Madam. "This is a protective charm I asked from Ci Temple before I came to Tian Chan Mountain. It's used to ensure a person's health and smooth sailing in one's life. First Madam, please give this to older cousin Chang Yin for me."

First Madam was very pleased and praised Wei Luo for her thoughtfulness. "Of course. I'll personally hand this over to him soon."

Reassured, Wei Luo said with a smile, "I heard that First Aunt hasn't been sleeping well because of older cousin Chang Yin's problem. I just happen to have pomanders for soothing nerves. First Aunt, you can send someone to take some from my room. Heaven helps the worthy. Older cousin Chang Yin's injury will definitely improve."

First Madam sighed and said, "I hope so."

Then, worried that Zhao Jie had been waiting too long, she bid Wei Luo farewell and said to Zhao Jie, "Your Highness, I've kept you waiting. Let's go."

Zhao Jie casually glanced at the brocade box in First Madam's hand, then he looked at Wei Luo's figure from behind. He looked away and said, "Okay."

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Although several people were gathered in the main room out of concern for Wei Chang Yin's leg, Wei Chang Yin wasn't here

currently, so their conversation shifted to another topic. The group of people started to talk about Tian Chan Mountain's hot springs and scenery.

Fourth Madam Qin-shi said, "I only briefly soaked in the hot spring last night. When I woke up early this morning, all of the weariness from my body has vanished."

Second Madam said, "That's so true. My skin doesn't even feel dry anymore..."

Liang Yu Rong had gone to sleep early last night and didn't experience the benefits of the hot springs, so she didn't have anything to say. Because Wei Chang Mi was pestering her, Wei Luo didn't have a chance to speak either. So, she simply played along with him and only silently listened to the conversation.

Wei Bao Shan had even less leeway to speak. She stood behind Second Madam with her head lowered and an absent-minded appearance.

Second Madam originally didn't want to bring her here, but she was worried that Wei Bao Shan would complain to Second Master about being the only one left behind at home. So, she unwillingly brought her along. Second Madam didn't want to see her, so she was staying at a very remote courtyard. It took Wei Bao Shan at least 10 minutes to walk from where she was staying to Jin Ji Courtyard.

After standing for a while, Wei Bao Shan said to Second Madam Song-shi, "Madam, Bao Shan isn't feeling well. I want to go back to rest."

Second Madam didn't want to see her to begin with. She waved her hand and said, "You can leave. If you're not feeling well, then don't come out. I feel unlucky seeing you."

Wei Bao Shan's face paled. She saluted and left the main room.

Wei Luo looked Wei Bao Shan's figure as she left and had a

strange feeling. But at the moment, she couldn't figure out why she had that feeling.

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Wei Chang Mi held up an osmanthus cake to Wei Luo's lips and said with overly seriously tone and expression, "Ahhh. Old sister Ah Luo, eat this..."

Wei Luo went along with his action and bit off a piece of the osmanthus cake and chewed.

With bright eyes, Wei Chang Mi asked, "Is it yummy?"

Wei Luo nodded, "En, it's just a bit too sweet."

Wei Chang Mi stuffed the remaining part into his mouth. His cheeks were bulging as he said, "It doesn't taste too sweet to me."

Wei Luo suddenly thought of something. She abruptly stood up, dropped Wei Chang Mi into Liang Yu Rong's lap, and started walking outside. "Help me look after him. I'm going outside to walk around."

Liang Yu Rong asked, "Eh? Where are you going?"

Wei Luo didn't have time to reply. She lifted up her skirt and left the main room. She headed towards an osmanthus tree in Jin Ji Courtyard. This tree was located at the center of Jin Ji Courtyard. Regardless of where one came out, he or she would have to pass by this tree. Wei Luo had recently seen this decade-old tree on her way in. Its leaves had already fallen and only bare branches were left.

At the moment, Wei Bao Shan was currently standing underneath that tree. A burst of wind had blown her handkerchief onto the osmanthus tree's branch. She was standing on her tiptoes and trying to reach her handkerchief.

In the distance, Zhao Jie was coming out of Wei Chang Yin's room and was heading over here.

Wei Luo was idly standing in the verandah with her arms folded and watching with the cool eyes of a bystander. She didn't step forward to help Wei Bao Shan or greet Zhao Jie. She only stood there.

At first glance, Zhao Jie immediately saw Wei Luo and walked over to her in large strides. Seeing that she was only wearing a thin pomegranate red robe and a white dress beneath the robe, he immediately took off the black cloak with fox fur that he was wearing and draped it over her. "Why did you come out wearing so little clothing? Why are you just standing there? Aren't you worried about freezing?"

Wei Luo looked up. Her smile was as bright as fireworks as she sweetly said, "I didn't know when big brother would come out. I could only stand here and wait."

Zhao Jie scratched her nose. This wasn't a good place to talk. Anyone could come by here. He held her hand and started leading her out of the courtyard, "Perfect, this prince also has something to say to you."

Wei Luo didn't struggle. She obediently followed him.

When they passed by Wei Bao Shan, Zhao Jie didn't even glance at her as if he couldn't see her trying to get her handkerchief.

Wei Luo wasn't afraid of Wei Bao Shan seeing them. Wei Bao Shan didn't have any status in Duke Ying's household. No one would listen to her words. Wei Luo turned her head to look at her. Wei Bao Shan was also looking at them with a strange expression. She was barely able to smile at Wei Luo as she greeted, "Fourth Miss."

Wei Luo curved her lips and lightly said, "Miss Bao Shan."

Wei Bao Shan's expression changed. Wei Luo called her "Miss Bao

Shan" instead of "Miss Wei". This meant that Wei Luo didn't consider her a member of House Wei. She wasn't wrong. After all, Wei Bao Shan had been staying in Duke Ying's household for so long, but her name still hadn't been entered in the family genealogy records, much less included in the ranking. She was an outsider.

These words were also faint reminder for Wei Bao Shan to pay attention to her status.

Wei Bao Shan looked at Zhao Jie and Wei Luo's departing figures. Zhao Jie's eyes only had Wei Luo. He looked at her like she was treasure. He even intentionally walked slower out of concern for her footsteps. Wei Bao Shan looked at the handkerchief above her head. She didn't try to reach for it again. She turned around and also left.

## Chapter 121.3

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Zhao Jie led Wei Luo behind a fake mountain that was outside of Jin Ji Courtyard. Then, he lowered his gaze and asked her, "You specially requested a protective charm for Wei Chang Yin. Where's this prince's protective charm?"

Wei Luo had recently been focused on Wei Bao Shan. How could she have noticed that he was paying attention to a protective charm? No wonder Zhao Jie's face had become slightly gloomy when she gave the protective charm to First Madam. So, he was feeling jealous.

Actually, Wei Luo had already asked for a protective charm for him too when she went to Ci Temple with Wei Chang Hong. She just didn't have any chances to give it to him. But now that he was taking initiative to ask for it, she started teased him instead, "I only asked for a protective charm for older cousin Chang Yin because he's suffering from his leg injury. Why should I ask one for you?"

Zhao Jie said, "Hasn't this prince suffered from injuries? You saw my injuries when I came back from Shan Xi."

Wei Luo fallaciously argued, "But you're fine right now."

"The purpose of protective charms is to ensure safety. Do you only hope that Wei Chang Yin's life goes smoothly? What about this prince?" Zhao Jie pinched her cheek. He said, "When you go back, ask for a protective charm for me too."

Wei Luo had never seen him like this. In the end, she couldn't stop herself from laughing.

She took out a small, scented rectangular bag from the small, colorful bag embroidered with magnolia flowers hanging from her waist. The protective charm that Wei Luo had asked for was inside the scented bag. Wei Luo placed the scented bag in Zhao Jie's hand, "This is for you. I asked for it a while ago when I went to Ci

Temple. I just forgot to give it to you. I also put wormwood and plum flower petals inside. It can be used as sachet."

Zhao Jie brought it closer to look. There was a row of wisteria embroidered on the sachet. It looked stylish and simple. The sachet also smelled serene and elegant with a faint coolness. It was very suitable for a man. Zhao Jie was slightly surprised, "Did you embroider this sachet?"

Both of Wei Luo's hands were behind her back. Somewhat proudly, she said, "Who else would embroider for you?"

Zhao Jie smiled, "Since you already asked for one, why did you lie to me before?"

Wei Luo said, "If you obtain everything without difficulty, you'll definitely feel it's too easy and won't value it."

"I won't." Zhao Jie leaned over and lightly kissed her lips. He was clearly in a very good mood. "I'll wear this every day. I won't be able to bear taking it off for even one moment."

Wei Luo was worried that someone would pass by here, so she didn't linger here. After she gave him the protective charm, she pushed him away and returned to the main room.

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There was something that needed Zhao Jie's attention in the capital, so he left the next day.

Wei Luo lived in the hot spring villa on Tian Chan Mountain for an entire winter. She frequently dragged Liang Yu Rong to the bathhouse to soak in the hot spring. Not only did her skin become even whiter and softer, she also seemed to be glowing with energy. She and Liang Yu Rong spent their time very comfortably. During the day, they would drink tea and look at the snow or enjoy the beauty of the plum blossoms with the snow. Sometimes, they would also create new types of rouge using plum blossoms and camellia. At night, they would soak in the hot spring for skincare

and endlessly talk about everything under the sun.

Three months later, both of them had become even more beautiful. They were as lustrous as gems. A person would like them as soon as he or she saw them, especially Wei Luo. She was beautiful to begin with, now she was so lovely that it was hard to look away from her.

After Wei Luo came back from Tian Chan Mountain, when Old Madam saw her, she pulled her to her side and said, "This girl... You look so beautiful that your paternal grandmother doesn't even recognize you."

Wei Luo smiled and said, "Paternal grandmother, you look more lively than when I left."

Old Madam tapped Wei Luo's nose and said, "You know what to say to make me happy."

Even so, Old Madam was truly enjoying herself. Her expression showed that she was feeling joyful.

After Old Madam said a few words with Wei Luo, the conversation went to Wei Chang Yin's leg. After all, the most important thing about going to Tian Chan Mountain was to treat Wei Chang Yin's leg.

After Doctor Fu's treatment, Wei Chang Yin's condition had already improved a lot. Although he still couldn't walk, he was already feeling sensation beneath his knee. Doctor Fu said he didn't need to continue staying at the hot spring villa. As long as he cooperated with the medical treatment, he would be able to walk in a year. In the future, it would suffice if he went to the hot spring villa once a year.

Hearing this, Old Madam was crying as she said, "Wonderful. Really too wonderful... Chang Yin is such a good child. The Heavens wouldn't treat him unfairly..."

First Madam was crying along with her. "Mother is right. It's this



daughter-in-law's fault for being too lacking in knowledge and not finding a good doctor for Wei Chang Yin earlier. I've caused him to needlessly suffer for so many years..."

Old Madam patted her hand and said, "How could you be blamed for this? Everything is destined. As long as Chang Yin's leg can be healed..."

First Madam was too emotional. Her tears had soaked through a handkerchief. In the end, the hall wasn't quiet until a servant girl supported her out.

Wei Luo talked with Old Madam for a while before standing up and returning to Pine Courtyard.

After spring started, Wei Luo didn't even see Zhao Jie once.

Zhao Jie was too busy and didn't try to visit her many times. There were two times when Yue Li passed along messages to have Wei Luo go outside to see him, but Wei Luo didn't go. It wasn't good for them to see each other before the wedding. In the past, Zhao Jie was too audacious. Now that Wei Luo had returned home and the number of servants by her side had increased, Zhao Jie couldn't secretly see her. This was for the best. Wei Luo could peacefully prepare her dowry and improve her embroidery skills with Fourth Aunt Qin-shi's help. She still had to embroider pillows, blanket covers, and the bridal veil.

Everyone said that it was bad luck to meet before the wedding. Since Wei Luo was marrying Zhao Jie, then she naturally wanted their married life to be peaceful and pleasant. It was better to believe in this superstition than to be wrong.

And so, spring changed into summer and summer changed into autumn. In the middle, Wei Luo had her adulthood hairpin ceremony. Without noticing, October had arrived.

Wei Luo and Zhao Jie's wedding date was on October 8th. In other words, in a few days, Wei Luo would be marrying into Prince

Jing's household.

Counting the days, Wei Luo and Zhao Jie hadn't seen each other for half a year.

## Chapter 122.1

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Contrary to expectations, Wei Luo stayed composed during this time. Even though she hadn't seen Zhao Jie for so many days, she didn't feel like she was missing him that much. Actually, she did think about him, but there were too many things she had to prepare.

During the day, not only did she have to embroider pillows, bed sheets, and other bedding, she also had to learn how to manage the account books, the household, and other domestic duties with First Madam. She didn't have the free time to miss Zhao Jie. In the evening, she was busy conditioning her body with skincare treatments. A girl that was about to get married had to keep her entire body beautiful and fresh, including her hair and nails.

During the rare times that Wei Luo was free, she would spread herself out on a soft cushioned couch and have Jin Lu and Bai Lan massage her. As they massaged, she would gradually fall asleep. She didn't feel like the days had passed by quickly, but in the blink of an eye, it would soon be her and Zhao Jie's wedding day.

A daughter from Duke Ying's family was getting married and it was to the powerful and illustrious Prince Jing. Their wedding would naturally be exceedingly grand. From top to bottom, the residence was festively decorated. There were red silks hanging everywhere in celebration. The residence was full of joy and festivity. In the verandah, there were crimson octagonal lanterns hanging within three steps of each other and crimson paper cutouts wishing good luck and happiness pasted within five steps of each other. Even the osmanthus trees in the courtyards were covered with red silk ribbons. When the wind blew by, even the air seemed filled with jubilation.

Early in the morning, people from Prince Jing's residence delivered the wedding dress and shoes. Wei Luo tried on the clothing with Jin Lu and Bai Lan helping her. The clothing fitted

well. When Wei Luo thought about how she would be married to Zhao Jie the day after tomorrow, her cheeks turned red. She took off the dress she had just put on and said to Jin Lu, "This is good enough. Put it away until the wedding day."

With a smile, Jin Lu said, "Miss, aren't you going to try on the wedding shoes? They looked very exquisite. There are even several fingernail-sized bright pearls sewn on the top. This servant has never seen such high-quality pearls. His Highness Prince Jing isn't giving you shoes. He's giving you treasure."

Wei Luo glanced at the shoes in Jin Lu's hands. They really were as exquisite and extravagant as Jin Lu said. Because Wei Luo's feet were small, these shoes were like an incomparably exquisite piece of art. It made her almost reluctant to wear it. "I won't try them... There probably won't be anything wrong with the shoes made by Xiu Chun. I'll wear them on the wedding day."

The primary reason was that Wei Luo's toenails had just recently been dyed with a thin layer of balsamine mixture and it hadn't dried yet. She was worried about staining the shoes. Her feet were resting on a decoratively carved red sandalwood stool that was next to the couch. Her ten toenails had been dyed a delicate pink like the balsamine flower petals that would be blown through the window by the wind in summer. Plus, Wei Luo's smooth and plump toes were lovely and cute. Her white jade-like feet were lovable at first sight. Looking up, her delicate and slender ankles looked as if a gentle grasp could break them.

Even Bai Lan couldn't resist saying, "If this servant's feet was like Miss's, I definitely wouldn't be willing to use them to walk."

Jin Lu glanced at her, knocked her head, and said, "Don't be so talkative. Hurry up with dyeing Miss's fingernails too."

Wei Luo didn't like her nails to be too brightly colored, so her fingernails and toenails were only lightly tinted. Beeswax was also applied to protect the fingernails and make them glossier. Bai Lan

earnestly finished dyeing Wei Luo's fingernails, then she held up a fan, and said, "Miss, if this servant was His Highness Prince Jing, I would definitely be unwilling to let Miss go outside in the future."

Wei Luo couldn't move her hands, so she could only look at Bai Lan. "Why?"

Bai Lan licked her lips. With a despondent expression, she said, "You're so attractive. Even letting someone see you for one second would feel like suffering a huge loss."

Wei Luo giggled. Her smiling face looked harmonious.

Bai Lan continued, "Young Master Song Hui suffered a huge loss by canceling his engagement with you. House Song must be regretting to death..."

Seeing that Wei Luo's expression looked off, Jin Lu hurriedly scolded Bai Lan and pushed her to the side, "Why are you saying these words? Miss is going to be Princess Consort Jing. How could House Song be compared to Prince Jing?"

Bai Lan just realized that she had said something wrong. She quickly lowered her head and said, "This servant was feeling too happy and lost my senses. Miss..."

Wei Luo's expression quickly returned to normal and she didn't rebuke her. "I'm hungry. Bring me a bowl of snow fungus, quail egg, and milk soup."

Bai Lan respectfully withdrew from the room.

During this period of time, Wei Luo had deliberately not inquired about Count Zhong Yi's family's news. She didn't know how Song Hui had been recently. Wei Luo hadn't seen him since last autumn. She had only heard a few words from Count Zhong Yi's people when they came to pick up Du-shi. Count Zhong Yi intended to arrange another marriage for Song Hui. The other party's family background and appearance wasn't bad. Song Hui would probably also be getting married soon too.

Wei Luo supported her cheeks with her hands as she thought. This was good. She would be able to feel less guilty towards him.

## Chapter 122.2

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As the wedding day came closer, Wei Luo's heart felt as if it was suspended on tenterhooks.

Her future felt uncertain. She was leaving a familiar place for an unfamiliar one. But, she wasn't too obvious about her trepidation. Other than occasionally dazedly look through the window, she didn't show any signs.

Fourth Madam was worried that she wouldn't have enough servants after the wedding, so she gave her four servant girls and two older female servants. Old Madam also sent over two servant girls and handed over their ownership papers to Wei Luo, so that it would be easier for Wei Luo to give them orders.

The next day, Liang Yu Rong specially came over to see her and also brought along gossip.

"Do you remember the Wu Rong prince that came to the capital last year? I heard that during this summer he took a group of concubines with him when he went hunting. On the road, they encountered a group of unknown assassins and that fourth prince suffered serious injuries." Liang Yu Rong sighed, "This wouldn't be a big deal, but when he went back, he beat Gao Dan Yang in an outburst of rage. His beating caused Gao Dan Yang to miscarry..."

Wei Luo hadn't heard about this. Stunned, she stared at her and asked, "Wan Qi Zhen personally caused the miscarriage?"

Liang Yu Rong repeatedly nodded. "That Gao Dan Yang is really pitiful. She secretly sent a letter to her mother to ask her to bring her back home... But, why didn't she realize that this would be impossible? She was someone that married over there as part of the alliance agreement. If she came back without permission, it would destroy the relationship between the two countries. Even though Duke Ying's wife was extremely distressed, she couldn't help her. She could only send another two servant girls over there

to serve her."

She hadn't expected that Gao Dan Yang's life would be full of hardships. Wei Luo actually felt slightly sympathetic towards her. "Why do you know so much about this?"

Liang Yu Rong rubbed her nose and said, "My mother recently went over to Duke Zhen's residence and Duke Zhen's wife cried as she told her this. Then, my mother told me this when she came back. My mother also told me to sharpen my vigilance when it comes to my marriage partner in the future and to not marry a beast in human shape.

Wei Luo gave her a meaningful glance, "Oh, then what kind of person are you looking for?"

When all was said and done, Liang Yu Rong was an unmarried girl. She felt bashful when this topic came up. She pinched Wei Luo and said, "I'm not going to tell you."

Wei Luo laughed, "I still know even if you don't tell me. Isn't it..."

Liang Yu Rong immediately became anxious. She was scared that someone would overhear. She flung herself at Wei Luo and covered her mouth. "You still have energy to laugh at me. You should be thinking about what you'll be doing on your wedding day tomorrow."

Wei Luo blinked, "Doing?"

Liang Yu Rong quietly moved to her side and whispered into her ear, "I heard from my older sister-in-law, it's very painful for women the first time..."

Wei Luo's face burned. She pushed Liang Yu Rong away from her, "Y-you, go away!"

Her action didn't deter Liang Yu Rong from continuing to say, "Believe me. I wouldn't lie to you..."

Two girls that were closed with each other would be willing to



mention anything. Wei Luo thought about what happened in Chen Hua Hall's side chamber and the object that Zhao Jie revealed... Wei Luo had been too embarrassed to look at the time. She felt like she had been holding a burning iron. Her blushing face was unbearably red. She had originally wanted to tease Liang Yu Rong, but instead, she was the one that was being teased. Wei Luo pushed her towards the door and said, "It's not early anymore. You should go back. I still have many things I need to prepare."

Liang Yu Rong knew that she was only acting angry because she was feeling embarrassed, so she only smilingly said, "You don't need to push me. I'll leave, okay? After you marry Prince Jing, we won't be able to talk like this anymore."

That was true. Today was Wei Luo's last day as an unmarried girl.

Thinking of this, she actually felt faintly sad.

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In fact, there wasn't anything left for her to do. The servants had already packed up her dowry. They were just waiting to carry it over to Prince Jing's residence tomorrow.

Wei Luo's dowry was quite large. After all, Wei Kun privately loved her more. The dowry he had prepared for her was ten thousand taels more than Wei Zheng's. In addition, Old Madam had added twelve thousand taels to her dowry. Wei Luo also had the dowry that Third Madam had given to her when she was seven years old. In a total, a hundred thirty-six people were needed to carry over her dowry.

This wasn't a small number. It made Second Madam slightly jealous. When her two daughters had married, their dowries hadn't been as extravagant. But, when Second Madam thought about it again, she consoled herself with the thought that Wei Luo was marrying a prince. If her dowry was too little, other people would look down on her and this would damage Duke Ying's

family's reputation.

Wei Luo finally endured until evening. She used essential oils made of osmanthus flower in her bath and plum blossom balls to scent her hair. She sat on the couch and was eating a wu xiang pill. This wu xiang pill was made with orchid, osmanthus, angelica, white fu ling, and Korean mint. Honey had also been added to it. Eating it every day could improve the breath and natural body scent. Wei Luo had already been eating this for half a year. Not only did her body emit a faint fragrance, a sweet fragrance lingered in the space between her lips and teeth.

## Chapter 122.3

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Wei Luo didn't return to her senses until Jin Lu stepped closer and called out, "Miss."

Wei Luo asked, "What's wrong?"

Jin Luo leaned over and said, "To respond to Miss, Fourth Madam is here to see you."

Fourth Madam Qin-shi passed by the divider made of twelve red sandalwood pieces and came into the inner room. She said with a smile, "The servant girl called you several times before you responded. Ah Luo, what are you thinking about?"

Wei Luo hurriedly stood up, slipped into her satin embroidered shoes, walked forward, and said, "Fourth Aunt."

Qin-shi held her hand, lowered her head to glance at Wei Luo's exposed ankles, and helplessly said, "You're getting married tomorrow. Why are you still acting like an easily excitable child that hasn't grown up yet? How will Fourth Aunt be able to put down her worries?"

Wei Luo pulled Qin-shi's arm and led her to an arhat couch to sit down. "I just finished taking a bath. I heard that Fourth Aunt came and I was in a hurry to see you, so I momentarily forgot to follow etiquette. Fourth Aunt, don't laugh at me."

Qin-shi gently tapped her nose. Finding the situation funny, but also feeling helpless, she asked, "Oh, you. Did you think I didn't know that you were daydreaming?"

Wei Luo smiled and didn't refute.

Qin-shi knew that she was feeling anxious before her wedding. All girls would experience this, so she didn't continue to tease her. Qin-shi started talking with Wei Luo about how she would need to support her husband and educate her children. Actually, Wei Luo's aunts had already told her many things during the past several

days. Qin-shi was only saying these words again right now to make her feel more at ease. Thinking that Wei Luo would have to wake up early tomorrow, Qin-shi decided to condense her words. Then, she told the servant girls in the room to withdraw, including Jin Lu and Bai Lan.

Wei Luo curiously asked, "Fourth Aunt, what do you want to say to me? Why are you acting so secretive?"

Qin-shi took out a small booklet from her sleeve and brought it to Wei Luo's hand. "There are some things that would be inconvenient for Fourth Aunt to directly teach you. But, you must learn about the things that happen between a husband and wife. This is the booklet that my mother gave me before I got married. You're like the daughter that I didn't have. Ah Luo, you have to remember. Fourth Aunt hopes that your married life will go smoothly and peacefully."

Wei Luo was very moved when she heard these words. With large, watery eyes, she called out, "Fourth Aunt." However, when she lowered her head, opened the booklet, and saw the contents, she unnaturally froze. Her face slowly turned unspeakably red. She almost couldn't resist throwing the book away. "Fourth Aunt, this is..."

Fourth Madam Qin-shi stroked her head and gently said, "Good child, don't be embarrassed. This booklet will be useful to you after you get married."

This booklet contained picture after picture of amorous scenes.

Fantastic and strange postures of every description were painted in explicit detail. Wei Luo only hurriedly glanced through the booklet before closing it. In her previous lifetime, she hadn't experience the things between men and women. After all, she had only married a dead person and naturally wouldn't need to know this. This was the first time she had to straightforwardly face the affectionate love between men and women, so was naturally

feeling awkward. "I... Fourth Aunt, thank you. I'll definitely look at this."

Seeing her bashfulness, Qin-shi said with a smile, "Good, but don't stay up too late looking at this. Go to sleep early. You'll have to wake up early tomorrow to go through facial threading and dress up."

Wei Luo opened and closed her mouth, but she couldn't say a word. Of course, she wouldn't stay up too late to look at these pictures! This booklet wasn't anything good!

After Qin-shi was sent off, Wei Luo sat back down on the couch. She held the booklet as if it was a hot potato. She felt embarrassed, but when all was said and done, she really wanted to look. She curiously flipped through a few pages. The locations seemed to get stranger and stranger. On the bed, on the study table, on the floor, and even on the back of a horse... The more Wei Luo look, the redder her small face became. Her heart rate increased. Would she really be doing these things with Zhao Jie?

Fourth Aunt had said she would be using all of the things in this booklet. She could accept doing it in on a bed or a table, but she didn't want to do it on a horseback or behind a fake mountain in the courtyard.

Wei Luo closed the booklet. Feeling as if she was doing something shameful, she quietly walked on her tiptoes to the chest used to store her clothes and securely hid the booklet at the bottom of the chest. After doing this, Wei Luo called Jin Lu and Bai Lan inside to help her change her clothes and get ready for bed. She lied down on the red sandalwood bed and stared at the curtain above her head. With her mind full of unhealthy thoughts, she gradually fell asleep.

Tonight was Bai Lan's turn for night duty. Bai Lan was sleeping nearby on the couch in the outer room.

Shortly after the candles were blown out, a figure appeared next

to Wei Luo's bed.

Zhao Jie lifted up the bed curtain embellished with beautiful, golden embroidery. There was only one oil lamp left lit in the inner room. The lamp seemed as small as a bean and could barely illuminate the person on the bed. He hadn't seen her in half a year. There didn't seem to be any yearning on her face. Instead, it seemed even more rosy and cute. It was so lovely and glossy that people would feel moved just looking at it. She had probably been living very well. He stood next to her bed for a long time, but she stayed deeply asleep and didn't notice his presence at all.

Zhao Jie suddenly felt ridiculous. Sitting on the bedside, he gently stroked her slightly opened lips with his thumb. During this time, he had been busy with government affairs because he wanted to finish everything, so that he would have more time with her after the wedding. It was only by being busy that he could distract his mind and not think about her every moment. Even so, there were still times that he couldn't help wanting to see her. But, when he sent messages to her, she would pretend that she didn't see them and have him suffer as he waited in Ci Temple for her.

Zhao Jie squeezed her little nose, "Little heartless one, don't you miss me?"

Wei Luo couldn't breathe because he was squeezing her nose, so she subconsciously opened her mouth wider. In the next moment, he leaned down and sucked her tongue.

Wei Luo quietly whimpered and furrowed her eyebrows.

Content with his half-hearted attempt, he quickly let go and didn't wake her up.

Thinking about how he would be busy dealing with guests the entire day tomorrow, Zhao Jie only sat here briefly before leaving. But, after leaving, he kept thinking, did Wei Luo eat osmanthus and orchid flowers at night? Why did her mouth smell so sweet?

# Chapter 123.1

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Wei Luo didn't sleep well last night. She felt as if someone had come by as she was sleeping. There had been a faint scent of cool plum blossoms at the bedside. It was the same scent as the sachet she had given Zhao Jie. Later, someone had pinched her nose so that she couldn't breathe. A soft thing had also crept onto her tongue. She had thought she was dreaming at the time. But, the sensations had felt too real to be a dream.

Even when Wei Luo woke up the next morning, she still couldn't tell if someone had come by or not last night.

However, she didn't have time to keep thinking about this. Right after she opened her eyes, she saw Jin Lu and Bai Lan bringing inside a copper basin.

Jin Lu dampened a towel and used it to wipe Wei Luo's hands, then she asked, "Miss, why did you wake up so early? Old Madam and the other madams won't be here until later. You can still sleep for another hour."

Wei Luo shook her head and said, "I can't fall back asleep. What time is it?"

Jin Lu said, "To respond to Miss, it's 6 AM."

Wei Luo looked at the color of the sky to confirm the time of day. The first glimmer of dawn was barely showing. The outside courtyard was still covered by indigo. The sun was barely up and only a little bit of its radiance was shown. It would be impossible for her to fall asleep again, so she wrapped a light-colored outer robe with a flowering stem pattern around herself, sat up, and ordered Jin Lu and Bai Lan to help her get ready.

Jin Lu took out a small, colorful porcelain bottle, poured brightening pearl powder into the basin, and used her hand to mix in the powder. "Miss, you can wash your face now."

Wei Luo had blended this brightening pearl powder herself. It could whiten her skin and make her complexion glossier. It was even easier to use than the original brightening pearl powder that Han-shi made. Han-shi had praised Wei Luo by saying the student had surpassed the teacher.

(T/N: This powder is made by mixing various herbs. In modern day, it's added into soap to make it more convenient to use. Supposedly, it was originally created for Empress Cixi. )

After Wei Luo finished washing her face, used salt to brush her teeth, and held a piece of mint leaf in her mouth for a bit, she sat down on the couch facing the southern window and comfortably applied begonia honey to her face. She had also personally made this begonia honey mixture. It was made by combining mashed red begonia flowers into a large container of white honey. Then the mixture would be dried by sunlight for ten days. She would apply this mixture every morning to make her face look more radiant. It was also especially useful for preventing the skin from drying out because of chilly winter winds.

Right after Wei Luo finished applying the begonia flower honey mixture and rinsed off the excess amount, Fourth Madam Qin-shi and First Madam Li-shi came over.

Two older female servants wearing thin red silk bi jia tops embroidered with fern patterns were behind them. They were probably here to thread Wei Luo's face to remove facial hair.

First Madam said with a smile, "Ah Luo's complexion is so good. Did you sleep well last night? Look at this little face. It looks good enough that it doesn't need any makeup. It looks as moist and smooth as tofu."

First Madam was just joking. Regardless of how good her face was, she still needed to wear makeup on her wedding. However, Wei Luo's complexion really looked very good. After she had applied the begonia flower honey mixture, it concealed that she



didn't sleep well last night.

Qin-shi helped Wei Luo sit down in front of a mirror that was engraved with a pair of phoenixes and a flowering grape vine. She was also smiling as she said, "Our Ah Luo is naturally good-looking to begin with. She's definitely the most beautiful bride in the capital today."

Hearing herself being called "bride" for the first time, Wei Luo suddenly became vividly aware that she really was getting married today. For a moment, she blankly sat on the stool without saying a word.

The two older female servants stepped forward to look at her. If they had previously felt that Qin-shi's words were an exaggeration, they now couldn't help nodding their head in agreement. These two older female servants had seen many brides, even ones that were as beautiful as Wei Luo. But, those brides didn't have Wei Luo's aura of nobility and allure. A glance would show that she was a girl from an aristocratic family. She had an indescribable implicit charm that made people want to firmly hold onto her and also made them feel worried that they weren't worthy of her.

One of the older female servants said, "The bride looks truly charming and elegant. Her future husband is very blessed..."

Hearing these words, Qin-shi was naturally quite happy. She regarded Wei Luo as one of her children. Today, Wei Luo was getting married. Looking at the bright red lanterns and paper cutouts that were inside and outside the room, she actually felt a strong sense of being reluctant to part with her. However, right now wasn't the time to weep, so Qin-shi resisted the urge and said, "Start the threading for the bride."

The two older female servants walked to Wei Luo's side with one person on each side. They twisted the threads against Wei Luo's face. Before Wei Luo had time to react, she felt pain on her cheeks and she quietly yelped.

The older female servant comforted her, "Miss, endure it for a bit. There's only a little bit of hair on your face. This will be over soon." Then, she rapidly twisted the threads to remove more hair. She even laughed as she said, "When I was threading a bride from another family a few days ago, she had a lot of hair and I had to thread for an entire hour. Later, the bride felt that her face hurt as soon as she saw me."

Wei Luo wasn't the only one that was amused into laughing. Even First Madam and Fourth Madam couldn't resist laughing. The mood in the room finally became livelier.

After the threading, it was time to apply makeup and brush her hair.

Wei Luo properly sat in front of the bronze mirror and let the two older female servants torment her. Jin Lu and Bai Lan were nearby to help with minor tasks. Two hours later, Wei Luo's waist and back hurt from sitting still for so long, but everything was done. She carefully looked at the person in the mirror. She almost didn't recognize herself. Previously, Wei Luo could be described as an effortless freehand painting of flowing water. Now, she was a colorful and detailed landscape painting. Blue-green eye shadow, red lips, and a four-petal flower mark between her eyebrows. It was truly as glamorous and lush as gems and had a beautifully, alluring appeal.

Jin Lu and Bai Lan supported Wei Luo to change clothes behind the divider. When Wei Luo came out from behind the divider, Old Madam was leading Second Madam and Wei Ya into the inner room.

Old Madam stepped forward and eyed Wei Luo from top to bottom. She smiled in satisfaction and said, "Our Ah Luo looks even more beautiful while wearing a wedding dress."

With a blushing face, Wei Luo greeted her, "Paternal grandmother."

Wei Luo's was naturally petite and delicate. Compared to girls of the same age, she could barely be considered to have an average height. This wedding dress was custom-made for her with very exquisite stitching. Instead of looking like a child that had stole an adult's clothing, Wei Luo looked very suited to wearing this extravagant dress. Despite her delicate appearance, this dress only increased her dignified temperament.

There were also three other madams behind Old Madam. They were Duke Ding's wife, Marquis Ping Yuan's wife, and even Elder Princess Ping Yang, Zhao Xin. This princess always kept a very low profile and rarely attended her family's events, including palace banquets. Rumor said that her character and upbringing was outstanding and that her standards were extremely high, so that most girls were below her notice. Wei Luo had only seen her one time at a palace banquet and wouldn't have expected for her to appear today. Based on the current circumstances, she was probably here to be her good luck woman. Although Wei Luo was surprised, she still greeted her.

Elder Princess Ping Yang looked at her. She didn't seem as unkind as rumors describe her. She patted Wei Luo's hand and said, "You're truly very beautiful and a perfect heaven-made match for Chang Sheng."

Elder Princess Ping Yang appeared today because Zhao Jie had privately requested her. She normally wouldn't have come, but since this was the first time her paternal nephew had asked her for a favor, she didn't have a reason to say no. In addition, she was also curious about what kind of girl would interest Zhao Jie. Zhao Jie had standards above average since he was a child.

If he wasn't interested in something, he would still refuse no matter how many times you pressured him into accepting it. It was rare for him to set his heart on something. She had heard that he had renovate Prince Jing's residence, especially the room that would be the bridal chamber for the future Princess Consort Jing.

He had also changed all of the servants in that courtyard. It really showed how much he cared about this young girl.

## Chapter 123.2

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Wei Luo hadn't expected that Elder Princess Ping Yang would praise her. Her faint smile in response was bashful.

There were many people gathered in Wei Luo's small room and they almost seemed to not be able to fit, so Old Madam led the good luck woman, First Madam and Second Madam to the main room to wait for Prince Jing's people that would be here to escort the bride later. Fourth Madam and Wei Ya were left behind to accompany Wei Luo.

Bai Lan held a pair of red satin shoes embroidered with good luck symbols for many descendants and brought it to Wei Luo's feet. She took off the shoes that Wei Luo was wearing and replaced it with the new shoes, "Miss, let me put on the new shoes. The marriage sedan will be here soon."

Seeing this pair of rare shoes, Wei Ya said, "I heard that Ah Luo's wedding dress and shoes were made by Xiu Chun. Xiu Chun only accepts five orders of custom-tailored clothing per year. I had my personal servant girl go over there to make a reservation on New Year, but she wasn't able to make it in time. How were you able to get a reservation?"

Of course, it wouldn't be good for Wei Luo to say that Zhao Jie had arranged this. Her dark eyes turned and she only silently pursed her lips.

Fourth Madam Qin-shi explained for her, "It's because His Highness Prince Jing is too thoughtful. He prepared everything for Ah Luo and didn't even want her to worry about her wedding dress."

Hearing these words, Wei Ya's face showed envy.

As they talked, they heard a servant girl come inside and say, "Madam, Miss, Sixth Young Master has come."

When Wei Chang Hong walked through the door, his gaze fell on Wei Luo, who was sitting on the red sandalwood couch that was decoratively carved with clouds. The gorgeous red robe that he was wearing today was much more official than his usual attire. A long time later, he finally said, "Father asked me to check if there was anything you haven't prepared yet."

Wei Luo and Wei Chang Hong hadn't seen each other three days. During this time, Wei Luo had been staying in the inner court while Chang Hong was in the outer court helping Wei Kun with managing issues. At night, he would rest in the outer court instead of returning to the inner court. Seeing him now, Wei Luo curved her almond eyes and smiled at him, "Everything is ready. Don't worry."

Wei Chang Hong nodded, but he didn't leave. His gaze was focused on Wei Luo. Not caring that Fourth Madam and Wei Ya were in the room, he said, "Ah Luo, tell me if Zhao Jie bullies you in the future. I'll always help you no matter what."

Wei Luo didn't have the time to hold back her trembling lips. His words had touched her soft spot and her eyes became teary. Wei Luo didn't stop herself from crying. It was normal to cry at a wedding. Her tears fell down as she stretched out her hand to grab Chang Hong's sleeve. She looked up and said, "Chang Hong, I can't bear to part with you."

Wei Chang Hong didn't want to separate from her either. But, she had to marry one day. He couldn't stop her from marrying because of his personal desire. Chang Hong stroked her head and said, "Don't cry. It'll be bad if you ruin your makeup from crying."

The more he talked, the more Wei Luo wanted to cry. Her fan-like eyelashes fluttered. Her eyes became wetter with each blink.

Chang Hong took the silk handkerchief that Fourth Madam handed to him. He leaned over and carefully and gently wiped the tears from Wei Luo's face. "Ah Luo, I don't want to part with you"

either. Could you not get married then?"

Shocked, Fourth Madam Qin-shi asked, "Chang Hong, what are you saying?"

Wei Luo seriously considered his words. Things had already reached this point. She couldn't stop the wedding right now. Beside, she wanted to be Zhao Jie's wife. And so, she shook her head.

Wei Chang smiled as if his recent words were only a joke. He said, "I'll have people come over to fix your makeup. You look like a tabby cat with your smeared makeup from crying."

Then, he pinched Wei Luo's cheek and said, "Don't cry anymore."

Wei Luo slowly stopped crying.

The older female servants came inside to fix her makeup. Fortunately, she hadn't cried too much and her makeup wasn't heavy. It only took a brief moment to fix. About ten minutes later, Prince Jing's people had arrived at Duke Ying's residence's entrance to escort the bride. The rumbling sound of the gongs and drums traveled to the inner court and filled it with excitement.

Prince Jing's people came inside the residence to urge the bride to come out. After the third time, the bride went to the main room to formally say farewell to Old Madam, her father, and her aunts. After this, Chang Hang carried her into the marriage sedan on his back.

Wei Luo's head was covered in a veil with golden embroidery, so she couldn't see the scene in front of her. Before she had time to say a few words to Wei Chang Hong, the marriage sedan started to wobble as it was picked up and headed towards Prince Jing's residence.

Sitting inside the sedan, Wei Luo couldn't see the surrounding scenery. She could only hear sound from all directions. The sounds of woodwind, percussion, and brass instruments and the cheers of

children traveled to her ears. Her mood became more relaxed as she listened to these sounds during the ride. The swaying sedan finally arrived at Prince Jing's residence's entrance.

Zhao Jie was wearing a crimson robe decorated with golden lotuses and happiness symbols. The flowers on his robe were exactly the same as the ones on Wei Luo's dress. He smoothly and naturally dismounted from the horse. Then, he took the bow decorated with animal bones from a servant boy and shot an arrow at the sedan's door (to signify overcoming difficulty before seeing the bride) before taking the knotted red silk ribbon from Elder Princess Ping Yang's hands to lead Wei Luo off the marriage sedan.

Wei Luo couldn't see the road, so she could only walk slowly. He led her to step over a saddle\*, over the fire plate\*\*, bowed to heaven and earth\*\*\*, and into the bridal chamber...

\* symbolizes a safe marriage because one of the Chinese characters in saddle is the same as safety

\*\* symbolizes burning bad luck

\*\*\* ancient wedding ceremony, somewhat equivalent to saying vows and saying "I do" in modern wedding

A crowd of people escorted Wei Luo into the bridal chamber. She didn't internally sigh in relief until she sat down on the crimson quilt.

It was finally finished.

Wei Luo and Zhao Jie's bridal chamber was located in the center of Prince Jing's residence. The courtyard was called Zhang Tai Courtyard. The room wasn't outdone by the decorations in Duke Ying's residence. There were dazzling spots of red everywhere: red candles, red lanterns, red quilts, and red curtains. The surroundings cast a light layer of joyful red glow on everyone's face.

Zhao Jie took the auspicious jade stick from the matron of honor



and slowly lifted up Wei Luo's veil.

Wei Luo looked up and finally saw Zhao Jie after being led by the red silk during the ceremony. She hadn't seen him in half a year. Zhao Jie seemed to have lost weight. His facial features seemed more clearly defined and his heroic spirit was intimidating, but the intoxicating smile on his lips decreased the coldness of his eyebrows and increased his overall warmth.

There were still other people inside the room, so Wei Luo was too shy to continue looking. She quickly lowered her eyes.

A woman teased, "The groom is too overwhelmed by the bride's beauty. He even forgot to blink."

Wei Luo, "..."

A rarely seen uneasiness appeared on Zhao Jie's face. Soon after, he smiled and didn't refute her words.

The matron of honor led the servant girls to sprinkle peanuts, lotus seeds, and other items over Wei Luo and Zhao Jie. This was a symbolic gesture to wish them good fortune in wealth and for them to be blessed with having children soon.

Zhao Jie still had to go to the outer court to deal with the guests. He left after drinking the matrimonial wine. Wei Luo was left in the room with a few women.

These women were all Zhao Jie's elders. Wei Luo had met a few of them before. It wouldn't be good for her to speak, so she just sat on the crimson quilt embroidered with dragons and phoenixes and attentively listened to them speak.

Wei Luo was slightly hungry, so she didn't remember most of their words. She kept her head lowered and showed a bashful smile that was just right.

Zhao Jie's maternal aunt, Marquis Sui Yang's wife, was a warm-hearted person. She introduced the group of women to Wei Luo and Wei Luo greeted them one by one. It was only in this moment

that Wei Luo discovered that Zhao Jie had many maternal and paternal aunts.

There was even a few women that were about the same age as Wei Luo. Because she wasn't familiar with them, she didn't have many words to say to them.

Fortunately, they didn't stay for long and Wei Luo could finally rest for a while.

Jin Lu came over and asked, "Miss, do you want to change your clothes and freshen up?"

Wei Luo felt that the ornaments on her head and her clothing weighed ten kilograms (approximately twenty-two pounds). She was so tired that her neck was almost bent over. She listened to Jin Lu's words and went to the cleansing room to take a bath and wash her hair. She wore new clothes after she came out of the bath.

Right at this time, Bai Lan brought inside a purple-lacquered food box. As she took the dishes out of the box, she said, "There were many other types of food in the kitchen. I just took the ones that Miss likes to eat. Miss, come here and eat some. You haven't eaten all day."

On the round rosewood table decoratively carved with lions, there were a plate of sliced honeycomb cake, a plate of glutinous rice balls covered in coconut flakes, a bowl of crab roe and tofu soup, a bowl of slowly stewed soup made with coconut milk, jujube, and hasma, and also a few other small dishes.

## Chapter 123.3

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After Wei Luo sat down at the round table and drank half a bowl of soup, she heard voices from outside. Bai Lan went out to look, returned to the room, and said, "His Highness has come back."

There were also a few princes and nobles following Zhao Jie. They all wanted to see what a girl that was treated like treasure by Zhao Jie looked like. Unfortunately, before they could see her, Zhao Jie had already entered the room, closed the door, and said, "You can all leave."

Ninth prince was naturally dissatisfied. He stretched out a hand to stop the door from closing completely. "Second brother, you're not being honest. You said you would let us see second sister-in-law!"

Zhao Jie reluctantly smiled, "Why would this prince let you see his wife? Don't you have a wife? Go home to look at her."

After all, the ninth prince had already been married for half a year, but this second older brother didn't get married until today.

The other people were also very dissatisfied. They protested one after another. But, to no avail, Zhao Jie wouldn't even let them see the side of her face. He slammed the door shut.

Zhao Jie turned around and saw Wei Luo standing behind him. Her hair was down and fastened to each side by a pair of golden iris hairpins. She was wearing a short, peach blossom pink jacket embroidered with auspicious clouds and a pleated skirt with the same color. She looked quiet and frail. Her large limpid eyes were looking at him. She didn't step forward or say a word. Zhao Jie would be worried that she had been scared if he didn't see that her cheeks were red.

Zhao Jie looked at the food on the table and asked with a smile, "Are you hungry?"

Wei Luo nodded. She finally thought of something to say, "I'll have someone prepare sobering soup for you since you've been drinking." Then, she ordered Jin Lu to bring a bowl of sobering soup over.

Wei Luo wasn't used to the sudden change in their relationship. Zhao Jie was still the same person, but he was no longer her big brother. He was now her husband and lord. She wasn't even sure how she should address him.

Zhao Jie actually wasn't drunk. His alcohol tolerance was very good. Although he had drunk a lot today, it wasn't to the point that his mind was unclear. But, he didn't refuse because he saw that Wei Luo was feeling anxious. He accommodatingly sat down across from her, "It'll take a while to prepare sobering soup. You should eat first. You probably didn't have time to eat all day, right?"

Wei Luo followed his action of sitting down. She lowered her head and went back to drinking that slowly stewed soup made with coconut milk, jujube, and hasma. Her voice was slightly pitiful as she said, "I had an apple this morning."

Zhao Jie's eyes were smiling. He had previously been blocking other people from seeing her, so he didn't have a chance to look at her. Now, there was only the two of them, so he started to stare at her without restraint. Wei Luo's body started to feel uneasy for his stare. She looked up and asked, "What are you looking at?"

Zhao Jie was supporting his cheek and chin with his hand. He slowly said, "I'm looking at my wife."

Wei Luo's face immediately became red. How could she eat after he said those words? Just as Wei Luo was about to glare at him, Jin Lu came into the room with a bowl of sobering soup. She carefully placed the soup in front of Zhao Jie, "Your Highness."

Zhao Jie nodded his head and said, "You can all withdraw."

The meanings of these words were very obvious. It meant that

the prince and princess consort didn't need the servant girls to serve them. They should all leave.

Jin Lu glanced at Wei Luo and bowed, then she led Bai Lan and the other servants girls out of the room.

The room became quiet. Wei Luo and Zhao Jie were the only two people left in the room. Wei Luo lost her appetite. Even a fool knew what Zhao Jie wanted to do next. But, she didn't feel ready. She could only lower her head and slowly drink her soup in hopes of delaying for a bit.

Zhao Jie wasn't in a hurry. After he finished drinking the sobering soup, he continued sitting at the table to wait for her.

Wei Luo, "..."

Wei Luo had never felt that eating a meal would feel so challenging. Under this oppressive atmosphere, she finished eating an entire plate of honeycomb cake until her stomach felt like it was going to burst. She really couldn't eat anymore. Unfortunately, Zhao Jie deliberately pushed the glutinous rice balls covered in coconut flakes in front of her. "Ah Luo, you haven't finished eating this."

Wei Luo looked up to glare at him. Her expression was remarkably like an irritated little squirrel. Her cheeks were puffed out. She looked ridiculously cute.

Zhao Jie involuntarily laughed. He walked to her side, pinched her cheeks, and said, "Are you full?"

Wei Luo swallowed the last bite of honeycomb cake and honestly admitted, "I ate too much."

Zhao Jie's hand reached out towards her stomach. "Let me touch to feel if it's bloated."

Wei Luo slapped his hand away. "You're not allowed to touch."

Was Zhao Jie the type of person that you could forbid from doing

something? Wei Luo's strength was fundamentally insignificant to him. He rubbed Wei Luo's stomach and said with a smile, "Let's see if you'll be silly enough to eat so much next time. Am I a drooling savage beast? Your eyes were practically glued to the table. You wouldn't even look at me once."

Wei Luo didn't expect that he would know her thoughts, "I did look at you."

She added, "I looked at you twice."

Zhao Jie gently smiled and carried her onto his lap. One hand gently rubbed her stomach and the other hand pinched her small hand. "It's not enough. You should always be looking at your husband."

Husband...

He actually so easily addressed himself that way?

Wei Luo couldn't copy his shamelessness. Wei Luo arched up in his embrace and stretched out her arms to wrap them around his neck. Her head was between his neck and shoulder as she mumbled, "I feel embarrassed."

At this moment, Zhao Jie's heart unexpectedly softened. He tightened the arm that was holding her. He almost wanted to crush her into his chest.

After a pause, Zhao Jie carried her towards the red sandalwood bed carved with clouds. He lifted the red curtains embroidered with golden thread and placed Wei Luo on the bed. He couldn't restrain the emotions in his voice as he asked, "Ah Luo, do you know how long I've waited for this day?"

Wei Luo rolled over into the inside of the bed and pushed the quilt to face him. "Don't know."

Zhao Jie grinned. With one leg pressing down against the bed, he leaned over to grasp her silky dark hair and brought it closer to sniff. "It's okay if you don't know. I'll tell you in a moment."

At this moment, even Wei Luo's ears had turned red. Of course, she wasn't naive enough to think that Zhao Jie would "tell" her using words.

The lights in the room were extinguished except for a pair of large candles that slowly burned. The candlelight illuminated the world including the scene inside the bed.

Wei Luo's clothes were gone and her face was flushed. She begged Zhao Jie, who was below her, "You can't do this..."

Zhao Jie lifted his head, leaned over, and hoarsely said into her ear, "My Ah Luo smells good everywhere. Not only does your body smell good, your mouth smells good, even there..."

Wei Luo weakly cried, "You can't."

Zhao Jie licked her cheeks and kissed her face. With his forehead sweating, he said, "I just want to make you feel good, so that you'll suffer less later. Darling, don't you like me?"

Wei Luo turned her head. The tears in her eyes glistened as she faintly gasped for breath. She didn't want to answer his question.

This night, there was only one word in Wei Luo's mind.

Grinding.

She felt like she was a piece of helpless ink stone that was lightly and heavily grinded against until the ink was finally rubbed out from her. There were unsightly marks left behind on the crimson quilt embroidered with dragons and phoenixes.

## Chapter 124.1

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The movements in the room continued for a long time and gradually became quieter when the moon was near the western horizon. However, the sound of Wei Luo's soft weeping continued.

Jin Lu and Bai Lan thought about the sounds they had recently heard at the same time. Hearing their Miss's delicate and soft cries that sounded like a kitten's would make a person's bones feel limp.

No one called them from inside, so they didn't dare to go into the room. Hearing that the matter had been done, one of the older female palace servants wearing a pale rose-colored bi jia top left in advance. Jin Lu, Ba Lan, and two other servant girls from Prince Jing's residence were left behind for the night vigil.

About two hours later, Zhao Jie's voice came from the room, "Bring hot water."

Jin Lu and Bai Lan looked at each other. It was finally finished... It had been such a long time. Would Miss's body be able to handle it? Although they were worried, their movements were swift. A short while later, they brought the water that had been boiled in the kitchen into the cleansing room behind the bedroom. Jin Lu walked to the divider and said with her head lowered, "Your Highness, the hot water has been prepared."

She didn't hear any response coming from the bed other than Wei Luo's soft milky voice saying, "En."

It didn't seem like she was answering Jin Lu's words. It was more like she was refusing something.

Jin Lu couldn't resist her curiosity. She looked up and her face immediately became red. She lowered her head again and hurriedly withdrew from the inner room.

Jin Lu walked out the door. The chilly wind blew by, but her brain was still thinking about the scene she had seen. Behind the



red curtains embroidered with golden thread, there were two shadows. Her Miss was straddling Prince Jing. With Prince Jing's arms holding Miss closely, the two people were kissing as if they were unwilling to separate from the other. One was so petite and the other was tall. It was unexpectedly agreeable sight.

It was only that Prince Jing was a bit too hasty. It was only the first night and their position was so intense. Would Miss be able to endure it...

Zhao Jie let go of Wei Luo's mouth and kissed downwards to suck away the saliva on her chin. Then, he held her soft earlobe in his mouth and hoarsely asked, "Ah Luo, let's go take a bath, okay?"

Wei Luo didn't have any strength left, so she went along with whatever he said.

Zhao Jie picked up her up and reached the cleansing room in a few steps. He put her down into the warm water, then he jumped into the water himself. This time, Zhao Jie didn't tell Jin Lu and Bai Lan to come inside. He personally served Wei Luo in cleaning. After he had rubbed her entire body, he lowered his head to look at her small face that was blushing from shyness. With a smile on his face, he whispered, "Let's do it one more time?"

Wei Luo suddenly opened her large, limpid eyes, and repeatedly shook her head. She pitifully said, "I don't want to."

One time had already been long enough. If they did it again, she would probably die here!

Zhao Jie leaned over to block her trembling lips and squeezed her palm, "Be good, husband will be more gently this time."

Then, the water splashed out onto the white marble floor and changed into clear, spring water that moistened a budding flower that was blooming from desire again and again.

Originally, the prince had said they were going to take a bath. But thirty minutes later, Jin Lu still didn't see them coming out and

she heard Wei Luo's voice becoming more and more hoarse. Feeling anxious and timid, she said, "This prince, he's really doesn't know how to be considerate towards our Miss..."

Bai Lan shook her head and suggested for her to not be impulsive, "Let's wait a little bit longer."

Another fifteen minutes passed before they heard Zhao Jie carrying Wei Luo to the inner room. Wei Luo was too exhausted and had already already passed out.

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Early next morning when the sky had only faintly brightened, Wei Luo's face felt itchy. She furrowed her eyebrows. Her long eyelashes fluttered like butterfly wings before she opened her bright eyes that were as glossy as water and met Zhao Jie's line of sight. Wei Luo's thoughts turned and turned. The messy and absurd memories from last night rushed through brain. Her pretty face turned red. She wanted to hide inside the quilt. But, her body was too sore and weak and she couldn't move at all.

Zhao Jie's lips showed a satisfied smile. He touched her small, soft, smooth face. "You must be tired out from last night. Does it still hurt?"

Wei Luo couldn't move her body, but she was able to tilt her head and bite down on his finger. Still angry, she said, "You're asking now? I already said I didn't want to."

Not only that, he kept forcing her to call him "husband". Wei Luo felt too shy to call him that. She couldn't change how she addressed him so quickly even if they were married. Because she wouldn't say that word, he used various ways to punish her. Don't bring up how pitifully Wei Luo had cried during that time.

Zhao Jie reached his hand out and took her into his embrace. He kissed her head and said, "Silly Ah Luo, how could I resist in that situation?"

Wei Luo blinked. Just as she was about to speak, she felt the change in his body. Her face immediately changed and she started to struggle. "You..."

Zhao Jie knew that she wouldn't be able to endure another time, so he slightly pushed her away. He said while laughing, "Don't move. I can't control this reaction. It's still early. You should go back to sleep for a bit and I'll come back to wake you up at 8 AM. I'll leave to go wash my face and rinse my mouth."

Wei Luo vigilantly looked at him without saying a word. He had frightened her too much last night. Right now, she didn't have any trust in him.

Zhao Jie stood up and changed into a casual black robe. After washing up, he went outside to practice martial arts by shadowboxing. Without his orders, the servants didn't dare to make too much noise and quietly walked as if they were tiptoeing. They were scared of waking Wei Luo up.

Not long after Zhao Jie left the room, Wei Luo quickly fell back asleep. This time, her sleep was much more peaceful than last night. By the time Zhao Jie returned to the inner room to wake Wei Lu up, the sun was already high up in the sky. Zhao Jie had already taken a bath and changed into a purple-red robe with a hornless dragon pattern.

## Chapter 124.2

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Wei Luo had curled herself into a ball. Her small, soft, rosy face was buried in the pillow as she comfortably slept. Her nose gently moved. It seemed that she was deeply asleep.

Zhao Jie almost couldn't bear to wake her up. He had truly not shown moderation last night and had even bitten her two times. It had clearly been her first time. She had been so delicate and tender. However, he really couldn't control himself at the time. She had been in his arms after he had thought about her and missed her for so long. He had finally obtained her. He couldn't act like Liu Xia Hui and hold his bride on his wedding night without his thoughts becoming messy.

Zhao Jie scratched Wei Luo's nose and gently called out, "Little fellow, wake up."

Wei Luo slowly opened her sleepy eyes. Because of their previous conversation, she wasn't as wary of Zhao Jie. She stretched her arms out and subconsciously wrapped them around his neck. She wiggled in his embrace and mumbled, "Oh, sleepy..."

Zhao Jie smiled and brought a green glazed porcelain cup to her lips, "Drink some water. We'll have to go to the palace soon. You can't continue to sleep right now. You can sleep as long as you want once we come back from the palace."

After Wei Luo finished drinking the cup of water from his hand, she returned to her original position. As soon as she thought of the reason for why her body was tired and sleepy, she angrily bit Zhao Jie's neck, "This is your fault."

Zhao Jie wasn't the slightest bit annoyed. He rubbed her head and went along with her words, "En, everything is my fault."

He was so honest about acknowledging his mistakes that Wei Luo didn't feel comfortable with continuing to blame him. It would

make her seem too unreasonable. Wei Luo tilted her head and said with a raspy voice, "Go and call Jin Lu and Bai Lan inside. I want to put on clothes."

Zhao Jie compliantly summoned Jin Lu and Bai Lan to the room.

Jin Lu and Bai Lan had already been standing outside for a long time, but they didn't dare to come inside without permission, especially Jin Lu. She was afraid of seeing an embarrassing scene like the one from last night. The two of them walked inside. One person was holding a copper basin and a towel. The other person was carrying clothes.

Zhao Jie said, "Put the clothes down on the bed. You can both leave."

Hearing his words, Jin Lu and Bai Lan lifted up their heads in surprise.

Even Wei Luo felt puzzled.

Zhao Jie repeated, "Leave."

Even though Jin Lu and Bai Lan felt confused, they could only retreated from the inner room.

Wei Luo burrowed out from the quilt. She angrily huffed, "Why did you tell them to leave? Who will help me put on clothes?" She wouldn't be able to properly put on her clothes with her current strength.

Just after these words were said, Wei Luo was faced with Zhao Jie's phoenix eyes that seemed like they were smiling. She froze for a moment. A bad premonition suddenly appeared in her mind.

Sure enough, Zhao Jie gently lifted her dark hair. "Did you forget? At Tian Chan Mountain, this prince said he would help you dress every day after we got married."

Wei Luo really wanted to kick him. Unfortunately, she didn't have the strength to move her leg. Feeling angry, annoyed, and

anxious, she refused, "No! Who wants your help?"

However, she was currently physically exhausted from being tossed around by Zhao Jie and couldn't match his energy. After only resisting for a short period of time, she was already so tired that she was panting. In the end, she could only let Zhao Jie dress her. At first, Zhao Jie's actions looked correct so Wei Luo thought he was very skillful. However, he seemed to be unfamiliar with a woman's clothing and groped around for a long time before he finished dressing Wei Luo.

After Wei Luo was finished dressing, Jin Lu and Bai Lan came inside to serve her with washing her face, rinsing her mouth, and brushing her hair. Wei Luo felt as if she had lost all of her dignity in front of her servant girls. She could only keep her gaze down and look at her nose. She pretended that they didn't know what had happened as they helped her get ready.

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Wei Luo was sitting at a round red sandalwood table decoratively carved with clouds. Just as she picked up her chopsticks and was about to start eating, a thought suddenly flashed through her mind. She turned her head and asked Zhao Jie, "Were you lying to me?"

Zhao Jie supported his chin with his hand and looked at her. "What was I lying about?"

Wei Luo angrily pointed at his nose. She finally responded with words, "At the hot spring villa, you were able to tell what was wrong with my clothes in a single glance. Why were you suddenly unable to help me put on my clothes?"

Zhao Jie actually didn't show the slightest sign of shame on his

face. He rubbed his nose and said, "I suddenly forgot."

Really, Wei Luo had never seen such a shameless person. She had already endured with him touching her body everywhere, but her bare body had been exposed to the air for so long because of him! Why was his heart so wicked? Feeling wronged, Wei Luo put down her chopsticks and said, "I don't want to eat anymore."

Zhao Jie sent away the two servant girls, fawningly carried her onto his leg, and smiled as he kissed her cheek. "How can you skip a meal? You'll have to meet with many people later when we go to the palace. We won't be able to return until late in the evening. I'll feel bad if my treasure feels hungry."

Wei Luo lifted her head up and glared at him, "I can't lift my hand. It feels sore."

Zhao Jie said, "I'll feed you." Then, he picked up the bowl of crab and tofu congee, scooped up a spoonful, and brought it to Wei Luo's lips.

Wei Luo didn't act willful. She was really hungry, so she let him feed her a bowl of congee, a cake shaped like a mini pumpkin and made from Chinese melon, and two flaky lily-shaped pastries with meat and pine nut filling. She also had several bites from other small side dishes until her stomach became perfectly round.

## Chapter 124.3

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After the meal, Jin Lu carried in a cup of long jing tea with mint. Wei Luo used it to rinse her mouth, then she held a wu xiang pill in her mouth until it dissolved.

Zhao Jie asked, "What are you eating?"

Wei Luo explained it to him.

Zhao Jie couldn't help laughing. He lowered his head and sucked Wei Luo's lips for a moment. "I wondered why you smell so sweet. So, there was something like this. Last night..."

Wei Luo guessed his meaning and hurriedly covered his mouth. She wouldn't let him continue speaking.

In addition to them, there was also Jin Lu, Bai Lan, and two other servant girls in the room. Those two servant girls were from Prince Jing's residence. One was called Yun Gua. The other was called Yu Suo. She heard that they were specially sent over by Empress Chen. They looked very neat with well-behaved manners. When Jin Lu and Bai Lan were helping Wei Luo with getting ready, those two had been responsible with the tea and water in the outer room. They seemed like they were well trained and skilled at serving.

Right now, while Zhao Jie and Wei Luo were bantering flirtatiously, their heads were lowered and they didn't dare to carelessly look around. They all focused their gazes on the floor underneath their feet.

Yun Gua and Yu Suo were born from dancers, so they had naturally seen many beautiful women. But, seeing Wei Luo today, they felt that those previous people couldn't be compared to her at all. Yesterday, Wei Luo had been glamorous and charming with her wedding makeup and adornments. She had been as lustrous as gems and made people unable to look away.



Today, she was wearing a pomegranate red wide-sleeve gauzy outer robe embroidered with peony flowers. Her hair was arranged into a fan he hairstyle with a golden butterfly and plum blossom hairpin on the top. Other decorative plum blossom hairpins surrounded the top hairpin. Although the gems on the plum blossom hairpins didn't look big, each of them was perfectly smooth, round, and extremely glossy. A single glance would tell that they were very expensive. Compared to yesterday, Wei Luo's face had increased in a woman's gentleness and charm. Her every movement easily carried loveliness. Her eyes look quick-witted and there seemed to be a bright light illuminating her.

No wonder the prince treated her so meticulously. She was such a lovely person, who wouldn't be willing to tenderly take care of her?

After breakfast, Wei Luo and Zhao Jie went to the palace together to greet Empress Chen and Emperor Chong Zhen. After they arrived at Qing Xi Palace and came down from the carriage, Wei Luo's legs still felt weak enough that she didn't feel like she could walk.

Zhao Jie stood in front of her. He looked at her and asked, "If you can't walk, I'll carry you there."

Wei Luo knocked away his stretched out hand. "How can that be okay? If His and Her Majesty saw, they'll definitely speak badly of me."

There were eyes everywhere in the palace. This was also the first time that Wei Luo and Zhao Jie came into the palace after their wedding. There would only be more instead of less people watching them. If Wei Luo agreed to let Zhao Jie carry her there, news would spread out from the palace next day. House Wei's Fourth Miss was excessively pampered and touchy with Prince Jing in public. They would say that her moral character was troubling and so on.

Zhao Jie was also aware of this point. He held her hand and said, "Then, I'll walk slower. We're not in a hurry to get there soon."

This was the only option they could choose.

On the way, Zhao Jie asked, "What did you just call the emperor and empress?"

Feeling that his question was strange, Wei Luo said, "His Majesty, Her Majesty."

Zhao Jie turned his head and looked at her with a smile, "You should change your address."

Wei Luo suddenly understood. She pursed her lips and with a blushing face, she said, "Understood."

When they arrived outside of Qing Xi Palace's Zhao Yang Hall, Wei Luo gritted her teeth as she walked up the stairs. Then, she let go of Zhao Jie's hand before they entered the hall. She saluted Emperor Chong Zhen and Empress Chen. "Daughter-in-law greets imperial father and mother."

Zhao Jie was at Wei Luo's side and followed her by saying, "Imperial son greets imperial father and mother."

Empress Chen and Emperor Chong Zhen had waited approximately the time to brew a cup of tea (10 minutes). They took into account that these two were newlyweds and this time was bound to be very sweet for them, so they didn't mind that they were late. Besides, Empress Chen was too busy being happy that Zhao Jie had finally married. She wished that they would stick to each other every day and give her an imperial grandson earlier. So, why would she blame them for being late?

Empress Chen said, "Quickly stand up. It drizzled last night. It probably wasn't easy to walk on the path. Were you two able to walk here unhindered?"

She even found them an excuse to use.

Wei Luo lifted her head up in surprise. It hadn't rained last night. There had only been a few raindrops. Empress Chen was really too wonderful. She had actually paved the steps for an excuse.

Zhao Jie was thick-skinned. Without a change in his expression, he said, "To respond to imperial mother, there was a slight delay on the way here. I'll have to ask imperial father and mother to please forgive us."

Empress Chen waved her hand and said, "It's fine. This empress and your imperial father had also just recently sat down."

Emperor Chong Zhen closed his hand into a fist and covered his mouth as he lightly coughed.

Other than the emperor and empress, there were also a few elder princesses in Zhao Yang Hall. They were all Zhao Jie's aunts. Wei Luo had briefly looked at them when she walked inside. Other than Elder Princess Ping Yang, Elder Princess Gao Yang, there was also one other elder princess. This elder princess looked dignified and conscientious. She was probably the rumored Elder Princess An Yang, who lived a secluded life.

Other than these three elder princesses, there were a few other princesses. Zhao Liuli was standing next to Empress Chen. She smiled at Wei Luo with joy. She opened her mouth and secretly mouthed out, "Second sister-in-law."

## Chapter 125.1

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Wei Luo closed her eyes slightly and pretended that she didn't see the sight of Zhao Liuli teasing her.

A palace servant girl carried an eight-sided bright red tray engraved with a waterfall scene with both hands as she walked forward. She was wearing a green court robe embroidered with flowers. There were two cups of tea on the tray. Wei Luo would offer these two cups of guanyin tea (a type of fruity oolong tea) to Emperor Chong Zhen and Empress Chen to show respect. Wei Luo picked up a colorful tea cup with a daffodil pattern, then she walked forward to Emperor Chong Zhen and respectfully said, "Imperial father, please drink this tea."

Emperor Chong Zhen had past his forty birthday, but he hadn't changed much during the last ten years. His body was healthy and his spirit was hale and hearty. She could see that Zhao Jie's face resembled Emperor Chong Zhen's face in several aspects. The emperor took the cup of tea from Wei Luo's hands, lowered his head to take a sip, and said with a smile, "Very good. This emperor remembers you. You were Liuli's study companion as a child, right?"

Wei Luo nodded. She was only six years old at that time. Almost ten years had passed since then. She hadn't expected that the emperor would still remember.

Since Emperor Chong Zhen had drunk her tea, he naturally had to give her a present. The emperor ordered the palace servant behind him to bring an item forward. It was a set of four burnt red calligraphy items with a flowering lotus pattern. "This emperor has heard that your calligraphy skills are pretty good. This emperor has kept this private collection of stationary items for a long time. Coincidentally, this set of brushes is suitable for writing regular script (a type of calligraphy style), so this will be your present."

Wei Luo walked forward to give her thanks and saw a high-quality ink stone that was placed on the tray. A certain thought appeared in her mind and she blushed.

Last night, while they were doing that, Zhao Jie had deliberately asked her, "Ah Luo, doesn't it seem like we're grinding?"

Wei Luo didn't understand at first, so he bit her ear and explained, "Grinding will produce ink just like your body."

Wei Luo desperately wished that she could kick him off the bed at that moment.

Seeing this ink stone right now and thinking of Zhao Jie's words, Wei Luo's thoughts naturally went crooked. When she looked back, she coincidentally met Zhao Jie's seemingly smiling eyes. Zhao Jie was really hateful. Even at this time, he was still in the mood to laugh at her. Wei Luo looked away, picked up the other cup of tea, and offered it to Empress Chen.

Empress Chen drank the tea and also gave her something. It was a hairpin with golden rats gnawing at young melons from flowering vines and a pair of matching earrings. The hairpin was exquisitely made with clear lines. The golden rats had rubies for eyes and golden flowers surrounded the golden rats. The flower petals were as delicate as a cicada's wings. Every aspect was very vivid and lifelike. Empress Chen said, "Chang Sheng personally selected this hairpin. Do you like it?"

(T/N: Round melon fruit represents a pregnant woman's "bump". It symbolizes a wish for many children. Rats are also commonly shown with trailing vine plants like melons to symbolize wish for future generations of children.)

Wei Luo was momentarily stumped for words. Then, she smiled and said, "Thank you imperial mother. Daughter-in-law really likes it."

Then, one by one, Wei Luo paid her respect to Zhao Jie's aunts.

Other than Elder Princess Gao Yang, the other two elder princesses didn't seem like they would be easy to get along with. Actually, they were very magnanimous people and they didn't put Wei Luo in a difficult spot. Elder Princess Ping Yang even gave Wei Luo a pair of golden bracelets embedded with gems. Each of those bracelets were embedded with a thumb-sized ruby, sapphire, and turquoise. On the side, Li Xiang's eyes turned red with jealousy from seeing this.

The three elder princesses had brought along their daughters, so Li Xiang would naturally be here. Elder Princess of An Yang's two daughters, Ji Ying and Ji Qian, were also here. Ji Ying was eighteen and Ji Qian was sixteen. Not long in their marriage, Elder Princess's husband had died. They only had one son called Tang Yun. He recently had his adulthood ceremony this year.

Wei Luo endured her discomfort and gave the presents she had prepared to the unmarried girls. Zhao Liuli happily thanked her, "Thank you second sister-in-law."

Ji Ying and Ji Yang also expressed their thanks. Although Li Xiang didn't like Wei Luo, she couldn't reject Wei Luo's gift during such a joyful occasion. If she did, it would be offending Emperor Chong Zhen and Empress Chen. She naturally wasn't bold enough to do that, so she accepted the bluish-green butterfly and flower hair accessory that was inlaid with gems that Wei Luo gave her. "Thank you second cousin's wife."

Wei Luo said, "No need to be courteous."

Emperor Chong Zhen only had a few collateral relatives. Most of his brothers had been exiled when they lost the competition for the position of heir apparent for the throne. Prince Rui was only one prince left. He had a reprehensible moral character and was an inept person that had abandoned all restraint and couldn't be helped. Because he had the same mother as Emperor Chong Zhen, he was able to survive. Prince Rui's wife had fallen sick today, so she couldn't come to the palace. She had entrusted someone to

deliver her present. Wei Luo accepted a precious red coral ruyi carved lingzhi mushrooms.

Empress Chen was able to see that Wei Luo was feeling unwell, so she wanted to let her rest for a while, "Later, you'll have to go worship the ancestors and be entered into the genealogy records. Liuli, bring Ah Luo to Chen Hua Hall to sit for a bit. When the time comes, imperial mother will send someone to call you over."

Just as Zhao Liuli was about to agree, the imperial sons had come here after finishing class. They had rushed from the imperial study to Qing Xi Palace to see their second sister-in-law.

Empress Chen smiled and said, "This group of monkeys had complained to this empress yesterday. They said that Chang Sheng had driven them away before they could even glance at the bride's face. It's still early and they're already rushing over here."

Hearing these words, Wei Luo cast a sidelong glance at Zhao Jie. Zhao Jie's expression didn't change. He seemed very calm.

Not long after, a group of princes wearing traditional han clothing walked into Zhao Yang Hall. They first saluted Emperor Chong Zhen and Empress Chen, then they went to Zhao Jie and Wei Luo's side and properly saluted. "Second imperial brother, second imperial sister-in-law."

The group of people straightened from saluting. They were all mesmerized when they saw Wei Luo.

They all had splendid statuses and had all types of women at their sides. Even their servant girls were beautiful. But, when those people were compared to Wei Luo, they were immediately considered inferior and not worth looking at.

Wei Luo was wearing a pomegranate red wide-sleeve gauzy outer robe embroidered with peony flowers. Her rosy cheeks were glittering and there was a smile on her silky face. Her bright, limpid eyes were curved into crescents that resembled the moon in

the sky. She wasn't a lofty beauty. Her beauty was lovely and charming. She was so beautiful that you wanted to reach your hands out. But as soon as you did, she would be like a colorful lucky lao zi waist accessory. You thought you had her in your hand, but when you opened your hand to look, you would see that you were holding nothing.

Ninth prince Zhao Chen finally returned to his senses, genuinely sighed, and said, "No wonder second brother wasn't willing to let us see."

Who wouldn't want to hide a woman that was this beautiful?

When Wei Luo understood the meaning of his words, her smile congealed.

Ninth prince privately had a good relationship with Zhao Jie. Although the two of them didn't have the same mother, ninth prince's mother had died early and he had grown up by Empress Chen's side. Because he was closer with Zhao Jie than the other princes, he was more likely to put his foot in his mouth.

Zhao Jie looked at Zhao Chan in askance and bluntly asked, "Look not at what is contrary to propriety, has ninth brother not heard of this?"

Ninth prince was used his harsh words, so he wasn't angry or humiliated. He looked at the entrance, laughed, and said, "Ai, fifth brother and Brother Li have also come."

Wei Luo followed his gaze and coincidentally met Li Song's line of sight.

Li Song followed fifth prince Zhao Zhang into Zhao Yang Hall. He was wearing a dark reddish purple robe with a pattern of auspicious clouds. His handsome face was domineering as always. He was sluggish for a moment when he met Wei Luo's gaze. Soon after, he indifferently looked away from her. He saluted the emperor and empress, then he saluted Elder Princess Gao Yang



before following Zhao Zhang and walking to Zhao Jie and Wei Luo.

Zhao Zhang cupped his hand in greeting and said with a smile, "Second imperial sister-in-law."

Wei Luo smiled, "Fifth brother-in-law."

As for Li Song, he only stared at Wei Luo. He didn't say a word or salute. Wei Luo looked at him. Her pink lips slightly pursed. Although she was still smiling, a faint coldness appeared.

The atmosphere was very awkward.

Zhao Jie's eyes sunk. Without a change in his expression, he stepped forward so that he was in front of Wei Luo and said to Li Song, "Impudent."

This word wasn't said loudly or quietly, but it was full of sharpness and warning. It attracted the eyes of everyone in Zhao Yang Hall over here. Elder Princess Gao Yang hurriedly stood up and asked Li Song, "Song-er, what did you do?"

Li Song retreated half a step back, curved his lips into a smile, and said, "I can only blame second cousin's wife for being too beautiful. I lost my senses and forgot to salute. If I have offended you, please forgive me older cousin Prince Jing."

When everyone heard his words, they thought the matter wasn't a big deal and let out sighs in relief. Even so, Li Song's behavior was too impudent.

Zhao Jie expressionlessly said, "Don't let this happen again."

## Chapter 125.2

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After Wei Luo finally finished greeting the large group of people, Wei Luo followed Zhao Liuli to Chen Hua Hall to rest for a bit and Zhao Jie went to Lin De Hall to deal with the court officials that had come to congratulate him.

When Wei Luo arrived at Chen Hua Hall, she resisted the urge to immediately fall sleep and said a few sentences with Zhao Liuli before she fell into a deep sleep on the couch.

It wasn't easy for her to persevere until now. If Zhao Jie hadn't secretly helped by supporting her waist from behind, she would have already fallen down before now.

Zhao Liuli sat in front of the couch. She had intended to ask Wei Luo what it felt like after getting married, but she changed her mind after seeing Wei Luo's current appearance. She ordered a palace servant girl to bring a blanket embroidered with birds and clouds and covered Wei Luo with it so that she could sleep more comfortably.

Zhao Liuli supported her cheeks with her hands as she watched Wei Luo. Her heart felt both admiration and sourness. Ah Luo had married her imperial brother, but she still didn't know what the ending would be for her and Yang Zhen. Lately, Empress Chen had been focused on looking for a suitable marriage partner for her. She had hinted to Empress Chen several times that she temporarily didn't want to marry anyone. However, Empress Chen didn't listen to her at all. Zhao Liuli didn't have any other method except using the excuse that there weren't any talented youths that would be appropriate for a princess. This was how she delayed things up to now.

Counting their ages, Wei Luo was one year younger than her.

Zhao Liuli looked at that perfectly straight and tall figure outside the window. Seemingly without any reason, she became more

disappointed and frustrated. This wasn't the first time that she considered her future with Yang Zhen. If she told her imperial mother the truth, she probably wouldn't agree. If she continued to say nothing, she wouldn't be able to delay much longer. She had to marry someone in the end.

Zhao Liuli crouched on the couch facing the southern window and shouted at the person outside the window, "Older brother Yang Zhen."

Yang Zhen turned around and approached her. The weather was getting colder, so there was white frost on his valiant eyebrows from standing in the verandah for a long time. At the moment that he saw Zhao Liuli, his eyes became gentler. Separated by the window, he asked, "Your Highness, what is your order?"

Zhao Liuli propped up her chin and faintly smiled, "I heard that a juggling group from Xi Yu has come to the capital and that they're performing at Rong Chun. I really want to go there to watch."

After considering, Yang Zhen said, "I'll go plead with Prince Jing to take you out of the palace."

Zhao Liuli cheerfully nodded.

Yang Zhen remained standing outside of the window instead of leaving.

A long time later, Zhao Liuli slowly asked, "Older brother Yang Zhen, will you marry me?"

Yang Zhen's body stiffened. His gaze was fixed on Zhao Liuli. Zhao Liuli didn't notice that her eyes clearly showed uneasiness. It made him feel worried too. Yang Zhen couldn't restrain his emotions. He moved his hand to hold the hand that she had placed on the window. He said, "I will. Your Highness, wait for me. I'll definitely marry you."

Yang Zhen had already considered this. All the thoughts that Zhao Liuli had considered, he had thought about them too. Right

now, the sons of aristocratic families wouldn't be willing to marry a princess. If they married a princess, they wouldn't be able to continue advancing in their career. As long as he followed Zhao Jie, accomplished meritorious contributions, and obtained Emperor Chong Zhen's recognition of his worth, he had hopes that he would be able to marry Liuli.

There was currently a group of roving bandits in the south that were wreaking enough havoc to destroy the tranquility among the citizens. He had decided to follow Da Liang's troops to the south to quell this disastrous upheaval. But, he still hadn't mentioned his plan to Zhao Liuli. The troops would be departing in another month. He looked at Zhao Liuli's clear eyes and finally said, "Your Highness, I have something I want to discuss with you."

Zhao Liuli was currently feeling jubilant over his previous words. She asked with a smile, "What is it?"

Yang Zhen looked at her obedient appearance and a soft glow appeared in his eyes. "I want to take a trip to the south."

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In another area, Zhao Jie was currently walking back from Lin De Hall. He turned his head to ask Zhu Geng, "Has the matter with Xu Zhou's southern mountain been settled?"

As Zhu Geng walked, he said, "To respond to Your Highness, it's been completed. We have information that can be used against Xu Zhou's prefectural magistrate. He didn't dare to disobey. Once Prince Ru Yang arrives at the southern mountain, the prefectural magistrate will bring people to arrest him."

Zhao Jie nodded, "This prince wants this matter handled so that House Li won't have any leeway to escape."

Zhu Geng said, "Your Highness, be assured."

Prince Ru Yang had supported the wrong person and his son, Li Song, had angered His Highness. He wouldn't have a good ending.

His Highness had already given them favor by allowing them to remain free for such a long time. This time, House Li wouldn't be able to avoid their fate.

People that provoked Zhao Jie generally didn't have good endings. For example, that Wu Rong's fourth prince wasn't able to escape disaster even after returning to his country because he had been disrespectful towards Wei Luo. The people who had ambushed him were people sent by Zhao Jie. It was only that Zhao Jie hadn't expected that he would take his anger out on Gao Dan Yang and personally cause the death of their unborn child.

Gao Dan Yang was really a pitiful person.

Zhao Jie returned to Chen Hua Hall at noon. He saw Zhao Liuli blankly sitting on the couch facing the southern window and asked, "Where's Ah Luo?"

Zhao Liuli suddenly returned her senses. Her red eyes indicated that she had recently cried. She pointed towards the inner room, "Ah Luo is sleeping. Imperial brother, you should go inside to look."

Zhao Jie reached her side in a few steps and said, "Older brother will take care of your matter."

Then, he didn't say any more words before heading towards the inner room.

Zhao Liuli looked at his back figure and opened and closed her mouth in surprise. When had he found out about her relationship with Yang Zhen?"

When Zhao Jie arrived at Wei Luo's side, she was still sleeping. Chen Hua Hall's ground heating system was put into use earlier than the other halls. Even though autumn had started, the room was comfortably warm. It was so warm that there was a light layer of pink on Wei Luo's face. Her small mouth was slightly open. Because her little face was surrounded by a blanket, she felt itchy

and was rubbing against the pillow. Her action was finicky and laughable, but also cute.

Zhao Jie couldn't bear to wake her up, so he leaned over, picked her up from the couch, walked out from the inner room, and said to Zhao Liuli, "I'm leaving with your second sister-in-law. If you want to speak with Ah Luo, wait until a few days later to invite her into the palace."

The implication of these words was to not bother them during the first few days of their marriage.

Zhao Liuli wasn't a fool. She naturally understood the meaning of his words and blushingly said, "I'll order people to prepare a carriage."

Zhao Jie said, "No need. I already had one prepared."

Zhu Geng had already prepared a carriage that was parked in front of Qing Xi Palace's entrance. Usually, carriage from the outside couldn't come into the inner palace, even the carriages that belonged to princes. But, Zhao Jie broke the rule for Wei Luo today. Knowing that he was doing this for Wei Luo, Empress Chen pretended that she didn't know.

## Chapter 125.3

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Wei Luo slowly woke up after they left the palace.

She was sitting in Zhao Jie's lap when she opened her sleepy eyes, looked around, and revealed a rarely seen foolish side as she asked, "Are we going home?"

Zhao Jie was very pleased to hear her say, "going home". His hand was placed on the back of her head as he lowered his head to directly look at her, kissed her, and said, "Yes, we're going home."

Wei Luo had just woken up. Before she had time to orient herself, she subconsciously stuck her tongue out to show resistance. Her resistance failed and her tongue was sucked into his mouth instead.

Zhao Jie said with a smile, "You really could sleep today. You didn't see it, but imperial mother's view of me has changed. She's worried that I'll exhausted you."

Wei Luo rather agreed with Empress Chen's view. She mournfully said, "Exactly! Would I be this tired if it wasn't because of you?"

Zhao Jie laughed and didn't say a word.

Wei Luo curled up his arms. A moment later, she slowly said, "Big brother, let's discuss something."

Zhao Jie looked at her and tucked a strand of hair that was next to her lips behind her ear. "About?"

Wei Luo was slightly embarrassed. She buried her face into his chest and only a small ear was exposed. Her voice could barely be heard as she said, "Next time... Could you be gentler and less vigorous?"

Zhao Jie curved his phoenix eyes. His smiled became deeper and deeper as he asked, "Oh, why?"

Unfortunately, Wei Luo couldn't see this.

Wei Luo's voice became quieter and quieter. In the end, it was almost as quiet as a mosquito. "You're so big. It hurts too much."

Zhao Jie chuckled.

Wei Luo's ear tingled from hearing this sound. She lifted her head and earnestly said, "This is a serious matter."

Zhao Jie said, "Silly girly. Only the first time will hurt."

Wei Luo didn't believe him, "Really?"

Zhao Jie stroked her head, "If you don't believe me, how about trying again right now?"

It would be strange if Wei Luo agreed. It was broad daylight and they were inside a carriage. If the driver or the passersby heard them, she would rather smash her head into a pillar and die.

When the carriage had reached halfway, Wei Luo smelled roasted sweet potato from outside and had Zhao Jie leave the carriage to buy her one. The roasted sweet potato was too hot, so Wei Luo had Zhao Jie hold it. As Zhao Jie peeled the skin, she ate it small bite by small bite.

When she was about to eat the last bite, Zhao Jie deliberately asked, "I spent so much time peeling the potato for you. Aren't you going to leave a little bit behind for me?"

Wei Luo opened her mouth and put the last piece in her mouth. Very proud of herself, she said, "I already finished eating it."

Zhao Jie slightly closed his eyes. Shortly after, he smiled and said, "It's okay. There's still one more bite left."

Wei Luo fluttered her eyelashes. Just as she was about to ask how could there be one more bite left, he was already holding her face and moving his face downwards.

A short while later, Zhao Jie sat back down in his original position in perfect contentment, "Really sweet."



Wei Luo touched her mouth. She hadn't thought that he would do something like this. Stealing food from someone's mouth. This was really too excessive. But, even though she was silently rebuking him, she wasn't really angry.

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Emperor Chong Zhen had given Zhao Jie half a month off from work. In addition, Zhao Jie had finished everything during the previous period of time, so today and the next several days were very relaxed. He would be able to accompany Wei Luo every day.

When they returned to Prince Jing's residence, Wei Luo had slept enough and wasn't feeling sleepy anymore. But, her body was still feeling fairly sore.

Zhao Jie was holding Wei Luo in his embrace as they sat on the couch facing the southern window. Zhao Jie was reading a book and Wei Luo's head was lowered as she took stock of the gifts she had received today. Then, she had Jin Lu enter the items in Prince Jing's residence's account books.

Zhao Jie's was holding Wei Luo with both arms, so after he finished a page, he would have Wei Luo turn the page for him

Wei Luo found him bothersome. "Wouldn't it be fine if you just didn't hug me?"

With his chin on top of her head, Zhao Jie said with a smile, "My Ah Luo is so soft and smells so good, I can't bear to let go."

Wei Luo twitched her lips. Although she was annoyed, there was a trace of a smile in her eyes.

After all of these items were recorded, Wei Luo was originally planning on telling Jin Lu to go to the accounts room to bring back the account books for Prince Jing's residence's past few months so that she could look at it here. But, Zhao Jie stopped her and said, "We've only been married for one day. You don't need to be so anxious. The steward can manage these things. "

Wei Luo considered his words and thought that they were reasonable, so she didn't continue to insist. It wouldn't be too late for her to look at these things after she came back from visiting her family.

When night arrived and they had finished dinner, Wei Luo went to the cleansing room to bath.

Zhao Jie asked, "You really don't need your husband to help you?"

Wei Luo immediately refused, "No need."

If she let him help her, it would definitely turn out like yesterday. They wouldn't be done until early morning.

After Wei Luo finished bathing, she put on a light, loose silk top and a gauzy muslin skirt. She didn't wash her hair and had put up her hair using hairpins. This revealed her smooth, slender, white jade neck. When she walked back to the inner room, just as she was about to order Jin Lu and Bai Lan to bring lotion to her, she stopped walking when she saw Zhao Jie next to a trunk.

It was the trunk that she used to store her clothes.

The trunk was open.

She would skip wondering why Zhao Jie had opened her trunk. Wei Luo's face immediately didn't look good when she saw the booklet in Zhao Jie's hand. It was the booklet that fourth aunt had given to her the night before her wedding. As Wei Luo walked closer, she could almost see the position between the man and woman.

Zhao Jie lifted his head to look at her. There was a smile on his lips as he meaningfully asked her, "Ah Luo, have you seen everything in this booklet?"

Wei Luo's heart felt weak. Just as she was about to snatch away the booklet in Zhao Jie's hand, Zhao Jie swiftly grabbed her by the wrist and pulled her into his arms.

## Chapter 126.1

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Feeling mortified and angry, Wei Luo questioned him, "Why did you go through my trunk?"

Zhao Jie had one hand around her waist. It didn't look like he was using much strength, but she wasn't able to struggle free. He laughed and said, "Your servant girl forgot to close the trunk when she came inside to get your clothes, so this prince incidentally looked through it. I didn't expect to see this booklet."

Wei Luo was speechless. She had forgotten to bring her clothes when she went to the cleansing room and had indeed told Bai Lan to bring her clothes. She didn't expect that Bai Lan would thoughtlessly cause this careless mistake! She definitely had to properly settle the score with Bai Lan later. Just as she was about to stand up from Zhao Jie's lap, he pressed her down again. She turned her head to look at Zhao Jie. He looked as if he was waiting for an explanation. She could only purse her lips and uneasily say, "Fourth aunt gave me this. I only looked at two pages."

Zhao Jie's eyebrow was slightly raised, but he didn't let her go. "Which two pages?"

Wei Luo turned her head. She didn't want to have an extensive conversation about this topic with him.

Zhao Jie placed the booklet on the small vermilion-lacquered table decoratively carved with spirals that was in front of them. He pointed at one page and asked, "Is it this page?"

Wei Luo didn't even look at it. Without regard to his preceding words, she said, "The clothes that I'm going to wear tomorrow haven't been infused with incense yet. I'm going to call Jin Lu inside."

Zhao Jie didn't move. His arm was like an iron clamp. "That's not urgent. You can have the clothes infused with incense tomorrow

morning. Even if they aren't infused with incense, your body already smells good." He flipped to another page, pointed at the two people on the page, and said, "Ah Luo, look. Isn't this what we did last night?"

Wei Luo's cheeks were burning red. She hurriedly covered the page with both of her hands. "You're not allowed to look."

Zhao Jie's laughter traveled to her ear. He asked, "Let's try 'an old tree is deep-rooted' tonight, okay?"

(T/N: "An old tree is deep-rooted" is a variation of cowgirl position. No pictures this time. But if you're really curious, you can Google this NSFW image [老樹盤根](#).)

Wei Luo didn't clearly understand this position. But, it sounded very dirty just from the description. Her head shook like a rattle drum, "Don't want to..."

Zhao Jie gently bit her ear and coaxingly said, "How about looking at this book with me? I'll spare you tonight if you do."

Wei Luo didn't believe him. She doubtfully asked, "Really?"

Zhao Jie nodded and seemed very sincere as he said, "Really."

Wei Luo skeptically looked at him. He didn't seem as if he was lying. She weighed her options back and forth before hesitantly nodding, "Then... okay." After all she hadn't fully recovered yet. That area was slightly sore. If it meant that she could rest for one night, she could close her eyes and accompany him as he looked through this booklet.

Unfortunately, Zhao Jie seemed to have seen through her thoughts. He held her chin with his thumb and forefinger and said, "You're not allowed to close your eyes. If I find out that you closed your eyes, my earlier words won't count."

Feeling aggravated, Wei Luo said, "You..."

Zhao Jie smiled, "Ah Luo, this is a very fair exchange."

Wei Luo helplessly flattened her lips, "Fine."

Zhao Jie closed the book, flipped to the first page again, and looked at the picture with her. As he looked, he explained, "This is called "Cranes Intersecting." This is what we did last night...."

The more that Wei Luo listened, the more her ears turned red. She had originally thought they could quickly finish looking through this booklet. She hadn't expected that he would explain everything in detail. Even if she closed her eyes, she could still hear his voice. In the end, Wei Luo really couldn't continue listening. She raised her head, covered his mouth by nibbling on his lips, then she pleaded, "Don't say anymore. Let's turn to the next page."

Zhao Jie's laughter spilled out. He seemed to really enjoy that she took the initiative.

When they had looked through half of the book, it was nightfall. The sky was already completely black outside. There were a few wooden lanterns carved with dragons, phoenixes, and good fortune characters that were hanging in the verandah. Their faint light passed through the paper windows and fell onto the couch that was nearest to the southern window. A man was holding a delicate pretty girl. His large hand went inside her light, loose silk top. He sucked on her lip and asked, "Do you want to keep looking?"

Wei Luo simply wanted to cry. She firmly shook her head, "No."

How could she have known that there would be many riding positions?! After almost an hour, they had only gone through half of the booklet. She was almost completely brainwashed by Zhao Jie. Her mind was full of dirty thoughts. Once Zhao Jie had fallen asleep, she would definitely take the opportunity to burn this book tonight!

Zhao Jie paused and said, "We can stop looking. Let's try "an old tree is deep-rooted" then."

Wei Luo asked in shock, "Didn't you say that you would spare me..."

Zhao Jie shamelessly said, "You haven't finished looking through this booklet with me, so those words naturally don't count."

Wei Luo straightened her body, angrily pushed him down onto the couch, and furiously said, "Zhao Jie, don't go too far!"

This was the first time she fumed with rage and called him by his name. Even a rabbit would bite people if it felt distressed. Besides, Wei Luo wasn't an agreeable rabbit to begin with. She was a sly and devious little fox.

Zhao Jie laughed loudly. He held her hand and said, "Ah Luo, didn't you know that all's fair in love and war?"

Wei Luo honestly said, "I've heard of this phrase, but I've never seen someone act as devious as you."

That night, Zhao Jie guided Wei Luo to try "An old tree is deep-rooted".

When Wei Luo woke up the next morning, her waist felt sore and her back ached. Zhao Jie's shoulders were covered in her bite marks.

During the following day, Wei Luo was forced by Zhao Jie to try the various positions in that booklet. She wouldn't quibble with him over doing this at nighttime, but he wouldn't even let her off during the daytime. He wanted to be with her at all times.

Wei Luo didn't dare to directly look the servants in their eyes during this time. She was afraid of seeing hints of mocking and teasing in their eyes. She had complained about this matter to Zhao Jie several times. Every time, Zhao Jie would say he would show more restraint in the future. But once they were on the bed, none of his words were valid.

## Chapter 126.2

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Wei Luo was lying on a cotton-padded pillow that was embroidered with joyful magpies. It was third day after the wedding and she was on her way to Duke Ying's residence. She said to Jin Lu and Bai Lan, who were currently massaging her, "Go down a bit. Ah, my waist..."

Jin Lu and Bai Lan obediently moved down. One massaged her waist and the other one rubbed her legs with just the right amount of force.

She wouldn't have asked them to massage her waist and rub her legs if she didn't have to go Duke Ying's residence today. It was too humiliating. She felt as if her accumulated dignity from the past years had completely disappeared. It was totally Zhao Jie's fault for not knowing restraint... Wei Luo turned her head and fiercely glared at Zhao Jie. Yet, Zhao Jie was thick-skinned. Not feeling bothered by her action, he stroked her head, "If you're tired, we won't stay at Duke Ying's residence for long. We can go home earlier and leave before lunch time."

Actually, Zhao Jie was already controlling himself quite a bit. He had taken into consideration that Wei Luo would have to return to her father's home today and didn't want tire her out, so they had only done it once last night. However, Wei Luo was too delicate. She was too tired from the last two days and was very slow in returning to normal. It wasn't strange that Zhao Jie couldn't control himself. He was at the age where his sexual appetite was as fierce as tigers and wolves. Having obtained the girl that he liked, how could he act like Liu Xia Hui?

(T/N: Liu Xia Hui was ancient politician known for his eminent virtue.)

When they arrived at Duke Ying's residence, Zhao Jie helped Wei Luo out of the carriage. Duke Ying and old madame led their

household to the entrance to welcome them, "Greetings Your Highnesses."

Wei Luo wouldn't accept their salute. She hurriedly walked forward to help them stand, "Grandfather, grandmother, please rise." Then, she turned around and greeted Wei Kun, "Daddy."

Zhao Jie was also very proper. He courteously addressed Wei Kun, "Father-in-law."

Wei Kun nodded. He moved to the side to welcome them into the residence.

After they had arrived at the main room and talked with the other members of House Wei, Wei Luo went with the other madams to the reception pavilion.

Fourth madam Qin-shi still couldn't put down her worries. She held Wei Luo's hand and asked, "Ah Luo, is His Highness Princess Jing treating you well?"

Other than always bullying her on the bed, Zhao Jie treated her very well in every other aspect. So, she nodded and said, "Fourth aunt, don't worry. He treats me very well."

Qin-shi always thought of Zhao Jie as a cruel and tyrannical person and worried that Wei Luo would be mistreated after she married him, so she said, "If Prince Jing mistreats you, tell fourth aunt. Although fourth aunt can't help you with much, I won't stand by and do nothing if you're being mistreated."

Wei Luo felt very moved. She nodded and said, "Okay."

Then, first madam and second madam asked a few questions to show concern. Wei Luo answered them one by one. Wei Ya's temperament had greatly changed after her mother was sent off to a temple. She was much more relaxed and easygoing. She also asked Wei Luo a few questions like how to take care of her skin and hair or ingenious methods for dressing up. Wei Luo's wasn't a petty person, so she gave Wei Ya some tips. Wei Ya was smiling as



she thanked Wei Luo.

First madam and second madam left the reception pavilion first around lunchtime. Wei Luo stopped fourth madam as she was about leave. Wei Luo stammered out, "Fourth aunt, I have something I want to ask you."

Qin-shi sat down on the couch again, "What's the matter? Go ahead and say it."

Wei Luo hesitated for a long time before she slowly told Qin-shi about the bedroom matter and asked her if there was a way to reduce the number of times.

She didn't expect that Qin-shi would let out a sigh in relief and smile after hearing her words. Qin-shi said, "You look so solemn before. I though Zhao Jie was maltreating you. Silly child, that man wants to do those things with you because he likes you and cares about you..." Then, she paused before adding, "But, since you're feeling troubled over this, fourth aunt does have a method."

Then, she leaned over and whispered into Wei Luo's ear.

As Wei Luo listened, she lowered her small face as her cheeks gradually became red.

Wei Luo's face was still red when they walked out of the reception pavilion.

The meals in Duke Ying's household weren't formal. Although the men and women sat separately, the room wasn't partitioned in the center by a divider. The women could see the men enjoying themselves with drinking on one side and the men could seen the women cheerfully talking and joking around on the other side.

Zhao Jie glanced towards Wei Luo. Her head was hanging down and she seemed completely focused with eating the food in front of her. She would occasionally say a few words with fourth madam and Wei Ya, but she didn't raise her head to look at him.

Zhao Jie looked away. As he held a wine cup, he wondered what

her aunts had told her to make her face unspeakably red.

Duke Ying and Wei Kun were in a very good mood. Duke Ying ordered the servants to bring out shao xing wine that been aged for many years. He unsealed the jar and poured Zhao Jie the first cup. Zhao Jie couldn't refuse, so he toasted Duke Ying and Wei Kun. Once this began, it wouldn't be easy to conclude this lunch. In a short amount of time, Zhao Jie drank a lot of wine. He fortunately had a good alcohol tolerance. Other than his head feeling slightly heavy, he was still clear-headed.

After lunch, Zhao Jie and Wei Luo decided to not stay for long and prepared to leave.

The group of people walked with them to the entrance to send them off.

Wei Chang Hong heard that Wei Luo and Zhao Jie weren't returning to Prince Jing's residence right away. They were going to West Street's Xiang Man to buy spices. While holding a horse's reins, he said, "I want to go to West Street too. Let's go there together."

Hearing his words, Zhao Jie silently glanced at him before turning around and entering the carriage.

Wei Luo naturally didn't disagree, "Great, it'll be nice to have another person come along."

Chang Hong nodded and mounted the horse.

Wei Luo also turned around and went inside the carriage.

The carriage slowly moved forward and left Duke Ying's residence.

Zhao Jie didn't like to speak much after drinking. He held Wei Luo and closed his eyes. Just when Wei Luo thought he had fallen asleep, he suddenly asked, "What did Fourth Madam say to you today?"

Wei Luo didn't have enough time to coherently respond, "What?"

Zhao Jie held her hand and gently rubbed her fingernails, "What did she tell you in the reception pavilion before lunch?"

Wei Luo recalled the method that fourth madam had taught her and immediately stiffened. She flatly denied, "Nothing much. Fourth aunt asked me if I was living well and whether or not I was being mistreated. Fourth aunt is very worried because of you..."

Zhao Jie chuckled, "What was your response?"

Wei Luo deliberated the word she would say. "I said..."

Before she could finish speaking, the carriage suddenly shook before abruptly stopping.

Zhao Jie raised his eyes and asked, "What happened?"

The carriage driver's voice traveled inside, "To respond to Your Highness, our carriage collided with another carriage because there's a group of people blocking the road. They're waiting for the congee that Great Yin Temple is currently giving out."

Great Yin Temple gave out congee at the front of their temple every month. At this time of the month, there would be many hungry refugees stepping forward to beg for congee, which caused this road to be congested.

They wouldn't need to take this path if they were returning to Prince Jing's residence. But since Wei Luo wanted to buy spices at Xiang Man, they had to pass through here. They hadn't expected that today would be the day that Great Yin Temple was giving out congee. A moment of carelessness by the driver had led to their carriage colliding into another carriage.

Hearing his words, Wei Luo wiggled out from Zhao Jie's arms and lifted up the curtain to look outside. There was a long, messy line of people in the street across from them. The scene was very disorderly.

Just as Wei Luo was going to say to Zhao Jie that they could buy the spices on another day, her line of sight changed and she saw the people on the other carriage. The smile on her mouth froze.

It was Jiang Miao Lan and Fu Xing Yun.

Chang Hong caught up to their carriage at this moment and asked, "Ah Luo, what happened?"

# Chapter 127.1

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At the same time Wei Chang Hong was asking his question, he also saw the two people across from them.

Fu Xing Yun had been coming to Duke Ying's residence to treat Wei Chang Yin's leg every few days, so the people in Duke Ying's household all recognized him. Wei Chang Hong had also seen him a few times, so he didn't feel that he was a stranger when he saw him right now. Wei Chang Hong looked at the woman next to Fu Xing Yun. The woman was wearing a white silk robe with an autumn-color outer robe embroidered with a pattern of flowers and cranes. Standing on the shaft of the carriage, she was beautiful in every aspect. Although she was middle-aged, her elegant bearing and charm still remained.

Wei Chang Hong tightened his grip on the reins and stopped on the roadside.

As Wei Chang Hong was scrutinizing Jiang Miao Lan, Jiang Miao Lan was also looking at him and Wei Luo. Wei Chang Hong was wearing a pale purple robe embroidered with good luck symbols, a brightly colored belt, and black boots. His posture was very straight as he sat on the jujube red horse. His body was tall and thin like a pine tree.

Next to him, Wei Luo was wearing a bright red crepe top and white gauzy skirt. Her hair was arranged in a ling yun hairstyle with a tong tian hair accessory and a pair of flower and leaf hairpins. The four-petal flowers were exceptionally elaborate and beautiful. Wei Luo's majestic style of dress created a feeling of absolute confidence and authority. A very noble and precious aura surrounded her.

Unfortunately, Wei Luo's eyes were cold without the slightest hint of friendly regard. It was so cold that it was painful to look at.

Wei Luo lifted her lips and said to Wei Chang Hong, "It's nothing.

The carriage collided with another carriage."

She said to the driver, "Since it's nothing, let's continue going forward."

Wei Chang Hong was staring blankly at first, but he quickly returned to normal. He nodded and said, "There's an alternative path. Although it'll take longer to get to West Street, it'll avoid Great Yin Temple. I'll go in front to lead the way."

Wei Luo nodded her head and agreed. She turned her head and ordered the driver to follow Wei Chang Hong, then she bent down to enter the carriage.

Their behavior was outrageously calm as if the person across from them was an insignificant passerby instead of their mother.

Actually, there wasn't any difference between Jiang Miao Lan and a passerby in their hearts. She had escaped to far away places during the past several years and didn't show slightest bit concern about them. She had never fulfilled the duties of a mother. Even House Wei's fourth madam had done more for them than her. Right now, on what basis should Wei Luo and Wei Chang Hong accept her?

Jiang Miao Lan also understood this point. In addition, when she thought of the words that Wei Luo had said to her, she didn't have to the face to call out to these two siblings. She only blankly stood in front of the carriage.

Fu Xing Yun held her hand and said towards the carriage across from them. "Fourth Miss, Sixth Young Master, please stay for a moment."

Wei Chang Hong rode the horse to their side. He slanted his head to glance at them and asked, "What do you wish to say?"

Fu Xing Yun said, "This humble servant discovered a small problem when I went to treat First Young Master's leg yesterday. Would the two of you be willing to go to Fei Cui with me so we can

discuss the matter without rushing?"

Wei Chang Hong looked at him silently. How could he not know what Fu Xing Yun was planning? "Since Doctor Fu discovered the problem yesterday, why didn't you say it then?"

Fu Xing Yin said with a smile, "This humble servant was negligent and forgot to tell First Madam before leaving."

The carriage's curtain opened from inside and Wei Luo's scowling face was revealed. "For a doctor to forget something like this, don't you feel embarrassed to call yourself a brilliant doctor with praiseworthy medical skills? How can your patients endure this? Where's your medical ethics?"

Fu Xing Yun froze for a moment. He hadn't expected that Wei Luo would rebuke him with such an impatient and angry expression. A short while later, he humbly lowered his head and said, "Fourth Miss's lecture was absolutely right."

Although this young girl looked delicate, pampered, and naive, her words were clever and eloquent. Fu Xing Yun could only feel ashamed after hearing her words.

Wei Luo didn't want to waste energy and time talking to him, so she bluntly asked, "What's wrong with my oldest cousin's leg? Just say your words here."

Fu Xing Yun looked at her, "Since Fourth Miss is speaking so frankly, I won't beat around the bushes. I just wanted to ask Miss and Young Master to go with me to Fei Cui to talk. The words that have to be said, it would be best to clearly explain everything in person." His words had a double meaning. Not only did it include himself, it also alluded to the matter between Wei Luo, Chang Hong, and Jiang Miao Lan.

Wei Luo furrowed her eyebrows.

She didn't immediately reply. Fu Xing Yun and Jiang Miao Lan looked at her as if her next words would determine if they lived or

died.

A short while later, a smooth voice traveled out from inside the carriage. "Since it's like that, then please lead the way."

Zhao Jie was sitting across from Wei Luo. He was wearing a red robe with a twin lion pattern. The collar of his robe was embroidered with a flowering lotus vine pattern. There was a jade accessory attached to his belt. He was lazily leaning against the carriage's wall. His expression was lax and his phoenix eyes were slightly closed. When a request was said from his mouth, it was as if other people weren't allowed to have a say in the matter. Zhao Jie slowly opened his eyes. His unfathomable dark eyes stared at Fu Xing Yun, then he looked at Jiang Miao Lan before saying, "Doctor Fu is right. Some things must be clearly said."

Jiang Miao Lan only knew that Wei Luo had married a prince and this prince was nine years older than Wei Luo. From the current sight, it was probably this person. Jiang Miao Lan didn't know anything about the relationship between Wei Luo and Zhao Jie. She only knew that the public's perception of Zhao Jie wasn't good, so she had been very concerned for Wei Luo.

Fu Xing Yun cupped his hands to greet Zhao Jie, then he ordered the driver to lead the way.

Wei Luo put down the carriage's curtain and asked Zhao Jie, "Why did you agree to his request?"

Zhao Jie leaned forward, took hold of the hand at her side, and smoothly brought Wei Luo into his arms. He buried his face in the nook between her neck and shoulder, breathed in her lovely scent, and said, "This prince wants to resolve the issue that heavily weighs on your mind."

Wei Luo froze for a moment and became silent.

She had forgotten. Zhao Jie knew about Jiang Miao Lan. Zhao Jie had been with her when Jiang Miao Lan and Fu Xing Yun had



appeared at the inn next to Xiu Chun last time.

At that time, Jiang Miao Lan had rushed out in the rain and said to her, "Sweetie, I'm your mother." Zhao Jie had probably also heard her words. At that time, her heart didn't feel angry. She only thought that her words were laughable. She found it ridiculous that Jiang Miao Lan had the courage to call herself "mother."

Wei Luo held Zhao Jie's hand as her slender white jade-like fingers traced the lines on his palm. "Big brother, I don't need a mother anymore." Her words were very calm. There wasn't anger or resentment as she said, "I have you, Chang Hong, daddy, and fourth aunt... I don't need her."

Zhao Jie closed his hand around her small hand and separated her fingers so that their fingers were intertwined. "Then clearly tell her your feelings. Ah Luo, running away isn't a solution. You can only let go of this matter by talking things through. Since you married me, I don't want you to worry about other things." Then, Zhao Jie lightly tapped her forehead with his fingers, "Your little melon brain can only think about your husband."

Wei Luo caught his hand and said, "So, this was your motive. I was wondering why you were so proactive."

Zhao Jie chuckled and didn't refute her words.

## Chapter 127.2

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They soon arrived at Fei Cui. Fu Xing Yun arranged a private room and led the group of people to the second floor. After sitting down inside the private room, Wei Luo's first words were to Fu Xing Yun, "Doctor Fu, you said there was something wrong with my oldest cousin's leg. What's the problem?"

Wei Chang Yin was her oldest cousin and was inextricably linked with Liang Yu Rong. She had to be concerned about this issue.

Fu Xing Yun poured cups of tai ping hou kui tea (a famous type of green tea from Tai Ping County) for everyone. He sheepishly laughed and said, "It's not a serious matter. As your esteemed older cousin's muscles heal, he'll definitely feel itchiness and soreness. He just needs to endure this until it passes."

It was just this? Wei Luo looked at him and truly felt as if she had been cheated.

But, since she had already come here, she would do as Zhao Jie had said. She and Chang Hong would only be able to let go of this matter if they openly discussed and understood exactly what had happened back then.

Wei Luo considered for a moment, then she said to Jiang Miao Lan. "I want to know what happened back then." She paused for a moment, then she added, "after you gave birth to me and Chang Hong."

Jiang Miao Lan didn't expect that Wei Luo would take the initiative to speak with her. Her hand that was holding the blue-glazed porcelain cup trembled for a moment.

In the time it would take to finish a round of tea, Jiang Miao Lan finished narrating what had happened back then. There weren't any changes on Wei Luo and Chang Hong's faces. Their faces were as calm as tranquil waters without even the slight trace of a ripple.

It was if she had thrown a stone into a bottomless pond. After the initial sound of the stone hitting the water, there weren't any traces of the stone left.

Wei Luo slightly closed her eyes and emptily asked, "Then, why did you come back now?"

Jiang Miao Lan said, "Wu Rong's emperor became ill on the way to Da Liang. He happened to meet Xing Yun and me. Xing Yun treated Wu Rong's emperor's illness on the way to the capital... I didn't expect to see the two of you so soon."

Wei Luo sneered. She didn't show any mercy as she asked, "Did you really expect to not see us? Chang Hong and I live in Duke Ying's household. Since you came to the capital, how could it be possible that you wouldn't meet us?"

Jiang Miao was speechless.

Wei Luo finished drinking the tea and lowered her eyes as she asked Chang Hong, "I finished asking the things that I wanted. Chang Hong, is there something that you want to ask?"

Wei Chang Hong said, "No."

As a result, Wei Luo stood up and said to Jiang Miao Lan, "Let the past be the past. Since you abandoned us, we'll act as if we don't have you as a mother. You should also pretend that you had never given birth to us. Neither of us owes anything to the other. Don't appear in front of us again."

Jiang Miao Lan's pupils dilated. She hurriedly stood up and grabbed Wei Luo's hand, "Sweetie, I know I wronged you. Back then, my actions were wrong. I'm not requesting for your forgiveness..." Then, she swallowed and said, "Could you please not draw a line between us so quickly? I want to make things up to you. It's entirely my fault. I..."

"Not only were you wrong, you're also very stupid." Wei Luo coldly took her hand back and ruthlessly said, "Back then, Du-shi

and third aunt had worked together to deceive you. You easily believed everything they said. You only thought about leaving everything behind. Did you think about me and Chang Hong?"

Wei Luo asked her, "What's the use in compensating us now? Where were you when Du-shi almost sold me off into slavery? Where were you when third aunt almost killed me by poison? Where were you when someone pushed Chang Hong into a lake?"

Jiang Miao Lan's face turned pale. Her lips trembled, "What..."

Wei Luo paused. Soon after, her large eyes curved into a faint smile and she said in a sweet tone, "For me and Chang Hong to be able to live until now, it has nothing to do with you. You want to compensate us, but it's already too late. I don't want a mother like you. Chang Hong doesn't want you either. Since you were able to heartlessly abandon us back then, then you don't need to insincerely return to us now. From now on, we'll act as if we had never seen you. Don't bother us again."

Wei Luo's words were a tremendous shock to Jiang Miao Lan. Jiang Miao Lan staggered, "Sweetie, I'm sorry..."

"No need for apologies." Wei Luo had said everything that she wanted to say. There was no reason for her to continue staying here. "Don't cry either. I won't feel sorry for you."

Wei Luo leaned over, pulled Zhao Jie's hand, and started to lead him out of the private room. When she reached the entrance, she suddenly stopped, turned around, and said, "But there is something I should thank you for. Thank you for giving birth to Chang Hong and me. This is probably the best thing that you've done."

Then, she pushed open the door and left the private room.

Wei Chang Hong didn't linger either. He left the room shortly after Wei Luo.

Jiang Miao Lan held her face and cried until she almost lost her

voice.

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Wei Luo and Zhao Jie didn't immediately return home. Instead, they went to another street to buy spices and dried herbs at Xiang Man.

It would be winter soon and there would be an unpleasant odor from burning charcoal inside in winter. They could only use the smell of spices and dried herbs to conceal this odor. Other than masking the smell of charcoal, the spices could also be used to scent clothing.

Standing inside the store, Wei Luo selected ling ling xiang (similar to basil), nard, Indian sandalwood, agarwood, fennel, and a mixture of borneol and musk. She bought two hundred fifty grams of each item. She was still lost in her thoughts when the shopkeeper finished wrapping up the items for her.

The shopkeeper called out, "Madam?"

Wei Luo didn't respond.

Zhao Jie accepted the bundle for her. He paid the shopkeeper and led her out of the spice store.

"Ah Luo, pay attention." Zhao Jie stopped at the entrance. One hand was holding the spices and the other hand was pinching her face.

Wei Luo blinked. She held her face and took a step back, "Ouch."

Zhao Jie smiled, "Since everything has been clearly said, why are you still absent-minded?"

Wei Luo considered for a moment, then she shook her head and said, "I'm just thinking about something."

Zhao Jie naturally didn't believe her. "Oh, what are you thinking about?"

Wei Luo was silent for a while before she said, "If I have children

in the future and big brother makes another woman pregnant, would I abandon my children, or suffer in silence?"

Zhao Jie asked, "Then, have you thought of an answer?"

Wei Luo looked at him and suddenly brightly smiled, "I won't abandon my children or suffer in silence. I'll retaliate against big brother and that other woman, then I'll leave with my children."

Zhao Jie quietly looked at her, then he brought her into his arms and said into her ear, "Silly girl, something like that would never happen."

## Chapter 128.1

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When they returned to Prince Jing's residence, under the excuse of being "excessively worn out" during the past few days and being in a poor mood because of meeting Jiang Miao Lan, Wei Luo washed up and went to bed early. Zhao Jie wanted to be affection with her, but he could only helplessly smile after seeing that she was already wrapped up in the quilt and sleeping. He rubbed the soft, delicate earlobe that was exposed and said, "So fragile."

Wei Luo couldn't hear his words. She only felt that silk quilt wasn't as warm as Zhao Jie's chest. She turned over, wiggled her way into his arms until she found a comfortable position, and continued to sleep.

Zhao Jie's arm was placed behind her waist and he conveniently held her a little bit tighter. He knew that he had tired her out during the past few days, so he only lowered his head to kiss her forehead and didn't do any undue actions.

Zhao Jie thought of the words that Wei Luo had said at the spice shop's entrance today. She would rather leave with her children and remarry than accept sharing her husband with another woman. This little fellow normally looked so delicate, but she was actually more assertive than anyone else. He had experienced this a long time ago. She had told him her bottom line because she believed in him.

She wasn't like other girls. Other girls would accept unjust treatment for the person they loved. They would take a step back and keep retreating until their bottom line was thousands of miles away from their starting place. But, as soon as Wei Luo saw that her bottom line had been touched, she would immediately breakaway without any leeway for staying.

Just like what had happened today with Jiang Miao Lan.

Since Wei Luo had decided to not forgive her, then she truly

wouldn't forgive her. She would rather act like they were strangers than accept this incompetent mother.

It was both ruthless and left other people without any other alternatives.

Zhao Jie's fingers slid across her soft cheeks and he faintly smiled. How could he give her the opportunity to remarry? He had expended the upmost effort in obtaining her. There wasn't even enough time in the day for him to feel satisfied with caring and loving her. How could he allow other men the opportunity?

Wei Luo had a rare night of peaceful sleep where Zhao Jie didn't torment her. When she woke up, she felt refreshed and discovered that Zhao Jie was practicing martial arts in the courtyard.

This was Wei Luo's first time seeing Zhao practicing martial parts. She was wearing a thin moon white gown embroidered with magnolia flowers and had slipped into a pair of embroidered satin slippers. Leaning against the window frame, she openly admired Zhao Jie's straight and healthy back. The weather was cool in autumn, but there was a thin layer of sweat on his forehead. Under the shining morning sun, the sweat dripped down from his eyebrows to his chin, then flowed into his clothes. This outlined his deep facial features and made him seem even more aloof and handsome.

Wei Luo supported her cheeks in her hand. She wasn't in a rush to wash up. Her large black eyes circled around him

After Zhao Jie finished practicing, Yu Suo walked out from the verandah. Holding out a silk handkerchief, "Your Highness, how about wiping your sweat?"

Just as Zhao Jie was going to take the handkerchief, he suddenly thought of something and put down his arm. "You don't need to attend to this prince when I'm practicing martial arts in the future. Go serve the princess consort. She should be awake at this time."



Although Yu Suo had misgivings, she still nodded in acknowledgment.

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When Zhao Jie walked back to the room, he saw Wei Luo standing by the window while only wearing a thin robe with her ankles exposed. His face couldn't help looking more serious, "Why aren't you dressed properly?"

Wei Luo curved her large, round eyes. She said with a cute smile, "I was too engrossed with looking at you, so I forgot about changing."

Even though Zhao Jie knew that she was deliberately fawning over him, he still couldn't resist smiling. He leaned over, wrapped an arm around her slender waist and carried her onto a nearby couch.

Suddenly remembering something, Wei Luo said, "Ah! You're covered in sweat. It rubbed off on me."

Zhao Jie finished putting on her shoes for her. His fingers lingered over her slender ankles before he looked up and smiled at her. "Hmm? Do you not like this prince's sweat now? The past few times..."

Wei Luo guessed what he would say next and hurriedly covered his mouth.

When they had been stuck together doing that thing before, Zhao Jie's sweaty body had rubbed against her until her body became wet too. Although Wei Luo loved cleanness, who would be able to think about cleanness under those conditions? So, Wei Luo didn't say anything to him at the time. She didn't think that he would have the nerve to mention this.

Wei Luo pursed her lips and changed the topic, "Why didn't you

accept Yu Suo's handkerchief?"

Zhao Jie opened her hand and gently kissed it. "Ah Luo's words from yesterday has scared this prince. How could this prince dare to have any contact with other women? What would this prince do if your jar of vinegar is overturned and you take this prince's son away and remarry?"

Wei Luo took her hand away and scolded him, "Glib tongue."

Seeing that his face was covered in sweat, she used the edge of her sleeve to pat dry his forehead. As she wiped his sweat, she said, "I'm not an unreasonable person... It's fine as long as you don't overstep the bounds of what's proper." Then, she paused to think. Not feeling satisfied with her earlier words, she changed her mind and said, "Never mind. Only let servant boys come close to you and attend to you in the future."

Zhao Jie chuckled. He suddenly held her hand, moved closed to her ear, and said, "Don't worry. What this prince has accumulated over twenty years will only be given to you."

Wei Luo blushed. She pushed him away and said, "Shameless!"

But, what was the use of acting proper in front of the girl that you liked? In this world, what married couple acted properly in private? Even if there was such a couple, they most likely weren't in love with each other.

## Chapter 128.2

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After breakfast, Zhao Jie went to the study in the outer court. Wei Luo originally wanted to try the spices she had purchased yesterday, but Zhao Jie wouldn't allow her to stay in Zhang Tai Courtyard by herself. Since he was in the study, he had her sitting on the couch next to the southern window to practice writing. He even justified his actions by saying, "Didn't imperial father give you a set of calligraphy tools recently? Use that to practice writing. If you're not willing, you can also grind ink for me."

Wei Luo couldn't stand to hear the word "grinding". She glared at Zhao Jie, who was smiling with wicked intentions, and said, "... I'll practice writing."

Zhao Jie smiled and didn't continue to tease her. Seeing that she was obediently practicing writing, he started his own work.

Before their wedding, Zhao Jie had handled his current matters in advance, so that he could relax while accompanying Wei Luo for a month. However, a problem had popped up over Prince Ru Yang's matter and he had to handle it as soon as possible.

Zhao Zhang had hidden over ten thousand weapons in Xu Zhou's southern mountain. Zhao Jie was preparing to spread this information to lure Prince Ru Yang to the southern mountain, then communicate with Xu Zhou's prefectural magistrate to coordinate plans. At that time, there would be irrefutable evidences. Even if they wanted to argue, they wouldn't be able to. It would be a serious setback for Zhao Zhang to lose Prince Ru Yang, his right-hand man.

In addition, Zhao Zhang would be found guilty of secretly storing weapons. Emperor Chong Zhen would be vigilant against him and would never promote him to an important position.

But, Prince Ru Yang had somehow heard some news. Zhao Jie had no choice but to put his plan in motion earlier.

After Zhao Jie finished thinking a thorough plan, he wrote his letter, sealed the envelope with sealing ink, handed the letter to Zhu Geng, and said, "Deliver this letter quickly to Xu Zhou's prefecture magistrate. He'll know what to do."

After Zhu Geng left, Zhao Jie's gaze swept over to the couch next to the window. Wei Luo was wearing a light pink silk outer robe embroidered with lotus flowers, which was paired with a brightly colored pomegranate skirt. Underneath the shining sun, the pomegranate skirt was spread out on the couch like a bright, blossoming pomegranate flower that was full of beautiful vitality.

Zhao Jie admired this wife for a while. But then, seeing that Wei Luo still wasn't paying any attention to him, he couldn't help feeling slightly jealous. He walked forward and asked, "What are you writing? Why are you so focused?"

Wei Luo raised her head to look at him. She blinked, "The Heart of the Wisdom Perfection\*."

\* (T/N: This is one of the most popular and well-known Buddhist scriptures.)

Seeing her beautifully written words in regular script, Zhao Jie couldn't help saying a few sentences of praise.

Wei Luo brushed his hand away. As she lowered her head and prepared to write the remaining lines of the scripture, Zhao Jie had already sat down behind her and extended his long arm to pull her closer, "You haven't told me what Fourth Madam told you yesterday at Duke Ying's residence. Why was your face so red?"

Wei Luo froze after hearing these words. She very quickly thought of the method that Qin-shi had taught her. After struggling to think of an answer, she said, "Nothing much..."

Zhao Jie naturally didn't believe her. If it was nothing, why was her face so red? His hand covered her curves and he interrogated her with his mouth next to her ear, "En, are you going to say or

not?"

Wei Luo shrunk a bit. Her cheeks were slowly stained in a layer of red, "It really was nothing."

Zhao Jie's black eyes deepened and his hand became more forceful. Wei Luo whimpered and conceded, "I'll tell you tonight."

That night, as Zhao Jie pressed Wei Luo's body beneath his and leaned his forehead against her forehead, he breathed heavily and hoarsely said, "Are you trying to kill me..."

Wei Luo's little face was covered in sweat. Her entire body was trembling like a little boat. This boat was being unceasingly struck by the sea's waves. Fourth aunt must have lied to her. She said that if she tightened and squeezed, then a man would quickly surrender... But it was taking even longer tonight! Was this method really effective?

After going through this night, Wei Luo's little waist that had finally recovered started to feel sore again.

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When Jin Lu and Bai Lan cleaned the bed in the inner room, they would be so embarrassed that they couldn't raise their heads. They hurriedly rolled up the quilt on the bed and left. Without even looking, one could guess that the bedsheets had been unsightly with damp spots.

Wei Luo really hated Zhao Jie. Why couldn't he show more restraint? The skin on her face had thickened. She had learned to keep her expression the same when she was faced with the servant girls' ambiguous eyes.

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Wei Luo received a letter for Zhao Liuli today. It was invitation to take a trip outside the capital.

The letter didn't mention the specific location. Wei Luo was

slightly puzzled. When Zhao Liuli invited her to go somewhere, it was usually inside the capital. Where did Liuli want to go?

Around noon, Zhao Liuli came to pick her up.

Wei Luo entered the carriage and asked Zhao Liuli where they were going, but Liuli stayed reticent and was much quieter than usual. Liuli would normally be lively and energetic. What was going on today? Noticing that Liuli's strange behavior, Wei Luo didn't continue to question her. The carriage past the capital's gates, traveled many kilometers, and stopped at a hillside.

There was a man and a horse at the hillside. Wei Luo looked into the distance and saw that the person was Yang Zhen.

There was a vast army beneath the cliff. The soldiers were wearing zhao jia armor and heading towards south.

# Chapter 129.1

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But, why was Yang Zhen there?

While Wei Luo was feeling puzzled, Zhao Liuli had already jumped down from the carriage.

This carriage was rather ordinary. It wasn't comparable to the ostentatious carriage that Zhao Liuli usually rode in. It had a bluish green front curtain that was half new and half old and there was only one place servant girl inside the carriage. Zhao Liuli was normally followed by a group of young and old female servants when she was traveling, so the current situation today was rather strange.

Wei Luo chose to stay inside the carriage and wait to see how the situation would develop.

Zhao Liuli didn't have the spare thoughts to be concerned about this. With red eyes, she asked him, "Are you going to leave today?"

Yang Zhen's body was stiff as he nodded.

Zhao Liuli's red and teary eyes look very much like a rabbit's. She tightly grasped Yang Zhen's clothes and said, "Older brother Yang Zhen, why didn't you listen to me? I don't want you to go. I'll talk things through with imperial mother. She loves me dearly. She'll definitely agree to let me marry you. Guang Dong is so dangerous. What will I do if something happens to you? I don't want you to die. I don't want you to go..." As she said this, tears streamed down.

Yang Zhen lifted his head and gently wiped at the corners of her eyes. Every time she shed a tear, he would patiently wipe it away. "Didn't we already agree to this? Your Highness, I can't wrong you, much less let you suffer with me. If you marry me now, you would only be lowering your status. I can't give you a life of luxury or a high rank." He smiled. This was the first time he said words like

these.

His gaze was full of soft gentleness as he said, "I want to obtain achievements and return triumphant. I'll be worthy of you at that time."

Zhao Liuli wept, "When will you come back?"

Yang Zhen thought for a moment before saying, "I don't know for sure. At minimum, it'll be a few months. At most, it could be a year or two." He looked at Zhao Liuli and asked hopefully, "Your Highness, are you willing to wait for me?"

Zhao Liuli inwardly let out a sigh of relief. She was angry at his hastiness and being too sure of himself, so she deliberately said, "I'm not sure. Imperial mother has recently been looking for a good marriage for me. She also has me looking at court officials' sons and members of the imperial family. If older brother Yang Zhen comes back too late, I might not be able to bear the pressure from imperial father and mother and marry someone else."

Yang Zhen knew that Empress Chen was looking for a husband for Zhao Liuli. But, Empress Chen wasn't an inflexible person. Although the matchmaker introduced potential marriage partners and parents made the final decision, Empress Chen still placed a huge importance on what her daughter wanted. Empress Chen had summoned sons from aristocratic families to Zhao Yang Hall many times so that Zhao Liuli could look at these men from behind a twelve piece red sandalwood divider with paintings of beauties.

In order to evade marriage, Zhao Liuli would either criticize them for being too tall, too large, or too scheming. In short, she wasn't satisfied with any of them

One time, the prime minster's heir, Count Zhou Ying, coincidentally met Zhao Liuli as he was leaving Zhao Yang Hall and she was coming back from outside. The two of them met on the outside steps leading into the hall. Because Count Zhou Ying had liked Zhao Liuli for a long time, he offended her in a moment



of impulse. Afterwards, Zhao Liuli told Empress Chen about this matter. Not only did Empress Chen firmly admonish the prime minister, she also gave up on the idea of marrying Zhao Liuli to Count Zhou Ying. Moreover, a few days later, there was news that Count Zhou Ying was ambushed on the way home and severely injured. The prime minister still hadn't found out who was responsible for that attack to this day.

Zhao Liuli had treated this matter as a joke and told Yang Zhen about it. Yang Zhen was wiping his sword as he lightly said, "Those who offend Your Highness can't be let off easily."

Zhao Liuli realized at this moment that Yang Zhen was the one responsible for the ambush.

But, when she thought about it afterwards, she actually wasn't the slightest bit mad. There was even a trace of sweetness in heart. Wasn't this a representation of Yang Zhen care for her?

Yang Zhen tightly held her hand. He felt both angry and very powerless. He looked at her, "If only I could keep Your Highness in my pocket and bring you away." He leaned over and kissed her cheek. His voice was hoarse as he pleaded, "I'll do my best to come back soon. Don't marry someone else. Wait for me to come back to marry you."

Zhao Liuli lowered her head and rubbed her eyes, "I..."

The winding horn was suddenly blown from beneath the cliff. The heroic sound traveled far and spread to the entire valley. The army's uniform footsteps followed after the horn was blown. Their morale was high as the military platoon departed towards Guang Dong!

Yang Zhen squeezed Zhao Liuli's shoulder as he urged and pleaded, "Your Highness, will you please wait for me?"

Just as Zhao Liuli was about to nod, Yang Zhen flipped over to mount the horse. It was too late. The army had already started

moving. He moved two steps forward, but in the end, he still came back, leaned over, brought Zhao Liuli onto the horse, and urged the horse to continue walking forward along the hillside.

Zhao Liuli grabbed the horse's mane in surprise. Her voice was wrapped up in the wind, "Older brother Yang Zhen?"

Yang Zhen held her by the wrist, slowly followed the line of troops, and explained, "The carriage behind us will catch up in a moment to bring you back to the palace. Accompany me a bit longer."

Although his words weren't explicit, the humble request in his tone was too obvious. She couldn't refuse.

Zhao Liuli gently nodded and took out a small bag embroidered with an interlocking geometric pattern to give to him. "This is for you. Even though you won't need money while you're in the army, it'll still be good to bring money with you just in case."

She had never worried about the basic necessities and usually never carried money herself, much worry about her livelihood. Now, she had considered things up to this point for him. This really showed how much thought she put to his needs.

Yang Zhen felt touched. He saw her taking off the jade pendant from her neck and changing it with his. "I gave you this jade on my birthday. My piece is the left. Yours is the right. When you come back, let's change them back again. If you don't come back, I'll..."

Yang Zhen lowered his head and blocked her little chattering mouth. He would come back. He would come back even if he had to crawl back. He couldn't watch her marrying someone else. Otherwise, he would die with a grievance.

One of the soldiers that were below them raised his head and saw the two people on the hillside. He grinned and shouted, "Friend, who are you? You're so fortunate. Your little wife has traveled a long distance to send you off. This really makes us die of envy!"

These jealous words attracted everyone's attention.

One by one, the tall and large men raised their heads and saw the touching scene between the two people. Most people couldn't clearly see their faces, but a person with good eyes said, "Isn't that Guard Yang? Prince Jing personally recommended him." He clicked his tongue and added, "A really affectionate person..."

"Who's the person in his arms?"

"The cloak is blocking her. I can't tell."

"From her figure, she looks like a beauty..."

The soldiers enjoyed talking about this topic and looking at the two people even if they couldn't clearly see. Yang Zhen was someone that Zhao Jie had personally recommended. He would enter the army as the military commander of this detachment. There were naturally many people that weren't happy with this decision. Now, there was this scene and people had even more to say about him.

A short while later, the carriage from behind caught up to them. Yang Zhen brought Zhao Liuli to the carriage and Wei Luo lifted the carriage curtain to welcome her inside.

The soldiers only saw Zhao Liuli from the back and couldn't see her face. Just as they were feeling disappointed, a white jade-like hand with a gold bracelet embedded with a ruby and a sapphire appeared from inside the carriage. The luster of the gems shone brightly underneath the sunlight and they briefly saw a delicate figure's beautiful appearance. Before they had time to clearly see Wei Luo's face, the carriage curtain had already been put down and blocked the line of sight from outside.

"Damn, so beautiful. How many lifetimes did it take that Yang Zhen to cultivate such good fortune? He's blessed in every way..."

These words voiced everyone's thoughts.

## Chapter 129.2

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Wei Luo and Zhao Liuli went back to the capital. Once they were inside the capital, Wei Luo saw that Zhao Liuli's eyes were still red. Empress Chen would definitely be suspicious if she saw her like this, so Wei Luo led her to a teahouse on Willow Lane to listen to ping tan.

(T/N: Ping tan is storytelling through song that's usually accompanied by two people playing instruments.)

Wei Luo reserved a private room and went upstairs with Zhao Liuli.

The private room upstairs was separated into two spaces by a partition. There was a private space and a place to lean on the parapet to enjoy the ping tan below. "Du-shi the Tenth Daughter" was currently being sung downstairs and accompanied by musical instruments. Just like Zhao Liuli, the melody was sad and melancholy. The people listening felt sadder, but they couldn't free themselves from continuing to listen. Wei Luo pinched the spot between her eyebrows. Seeing Zhao Liuli's tears falling down, she wondered if they had come to the wrong place. She shouldn't have brought her here to listen to the ping tan...

Wei Luo actually understood Yang Zhen's point of view. He wanted to seek a better path so that he could grandly marry Zhao Liuli in the future. He didn't want the girl that he liked to suffer grievances. But, it was understandable for the other participant, Zhao Liuli, to be unwilling to part with Yang Zhen. Wei Luo didn't have any words to persuade her. She could only wait until Zhao Liuli figured things out for herself.

Zhao Jie probably knew about this matter. Otherwise, he wouldn't have agreed to let her come out. Wei Luo picked up the Ru Yao chrysanthemum-shaped teapot, poured tea for herself and Zhao Liuli, then she pushed a colorful teacup with a

chrysanthemum pattern in front of Zhao Liuli. "Liuli, I'm afraid that this teahouse will be drowned by your tears if you keep crying."

(T/N: Ru Yao was a famous kiln factory during the Song Dynasty known for its amazing glazing techniques.)

Zhao Liuli wiped her tears, twisted Wei Luo's hand with her thumb and forefinger for a second, and said, "Mean Ah Luo. You're actually making fun of me. Do you think I want to cry? I would stop if I could."

Wei Luo avoided future attempts by sitting down on the other side. After sitting down again, she supported her cheeks in her hands and looked at her. "It's a good thing that Yang Zhan went to Guang Dong to bring order there. Don't you think that he'll do beyond what's required? Perhaps, His Majesty will betroth you to him without him even asking when he safely come back in triumphant."

Wei Luo's words weren't impossible. With Yang Zhen's abilities, it would be easy for him to accomplish meritorious service.

Hearing her words, Zhao Liuli's cheeks turned red. "But..." She was worried that he would get injured.

Wei Luo added, "When that times comes, won't you be so lovingly inseparable from your older brother Yang Zhen that passersby will be envious to death?"

In the end, Zhao Liuli was an unmarried girl. Her face wasn't thick-skinned like Wei Luo's, which had been toughened by Zhao Jie's training. She immediately became embarrassed, "Y-you dare to make fun of me! Ah Luo, I know what goes on between you and imperial brother."

Startled, Wei Luo asked, "What?"

Zhao Liuli moved close to her ear and whispered, "The elderly female servant that imperial mother arranged in Prince Jing's

residence comes to the palace to report every day. She said that you and imperial brother don't leave the bed until very late each day. Tell me, what do the two of you do in your bedroom every day?"

This time, Wei Luo was the one that blushed. She pushed Zhao Liuli away and denied, "I'm not telling you."

It was Zhao Jie's fault. Never mind that he would pester her at night. Most of the time, he wouldn't let her leave the bed after he practiced martial arts in the morning. He would hug her when his body was covered in sweat, pressed her down, and do it one more time. Then, he would carry her to the cleaning room to bath...

Wei Luo wouldn't say anything, so Zhao Liuli kept insisting that she tell her. After they went back and forth about this for a while, Zhao Liuli's mood improved. She wasn't as sad as before and she gradually smiled.

Wei Luo stayed with her to talk for a while after that. Because Wei Luo had drunk too much tea, she started to leave the private room to go to the back courtyard.

Right after Wei Luo pushed open the divider, she heard the door from the neighboring private room opening. Wei Luo didn't pay attention to this. They were in the most inner private room, so they had to pass by the neighboring private room to leave. She walked forward two steps, inadvertently lifted her head, and met someone's shining gaze.

Li Song was standing at the private room's doorway. He was expressionlessly staring at her. There was a delicate and slightly familiar looking girl standing behind him. She was the singer that had recently acted as Du-shi.

The girl curiously stretched out her head and asked, "Master Li, why did you stop?"

Li Song reached a hand out, pressed it against her face, and

pushed her back her into the room without any tender, protective feelings towards the fairer sex. His thin lips lightly said, "Go away."

That girl was slightly unwilling to accept this. He had been so gentle before. Why was he suddenly treating her differently? Just as she was about say something, she saw his malicious face and immediately flinched. She blankly stood there.

Wei Luo looked away as if she had looked at something filthy. She started to walk past Li Song.

But she had only taken one step forward when his figure blocked her path in a flash. Wei Luo furrowed her eyebrows. She took a step left, but Li Song also followed her step. She took a step to the right, but he also went to the right. The man's tall and slim body blocked the woman's path as if he was a motionless towering mountain peak.

Li Song lowered his eyes to look at her and saw that her long eyelashes were trembling like two fluttering butterfly wings. Just as he was about to stretch his hand out to grab her, she had already raised her eyes. Her eyes held contempt and scorn. It was the type of gaze that Li Song hated the most. For a brief moment, he wanted more than anything to rip away these beautiful eyes and break her wings, so that she wouldn't be able despise him or push him away anymore.

A light flashed through Li Song's eyes. No one knew what he was thinking.

# Chapter 130

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Wei Luo curved up her lips and lightly said, "Go away."

Yet, Li Song didn't move. His eyes were still lowered as he looked at Wei Luo with a gaze that held a slight bit of detachment and arrogance.

One of his hands was hanging on the second floor's railing. The posture seemed casual, but his fingers were secretly exerting force. Seeing that he wasn't moving, Wei Luo simply went around him. Towards people that she didn't want to see, the best method to deal with them was to indifferently ignore them.

But, Li Song wasn't willing to let her leave like this. His hand stretched out and he tightly grabbed Wei Luo's wrist.

Wei Luo paused. It was only now that she smelled the strong odor of alcohol on his body. Previously, she was only thinking about leaving, so she hadn't paid any attention to him. Now, she saw that his eyes were blurry and his eyebrows were low. A single glance showed that he was shamefully drunk. She couldn't help disliking him even more. Wei Luo tried to pull her wrist away and her tone had changed to impatience, "Li Song, do you want to humiliate yourself even more?"

These words provoked him. Li Song's gaze became overcast. Instead of letting her go, he tightened his grip on her wrist. His oppressive body pressed closer to Wei Luo until her back was touching the door behind her. He leaned over and looked down. "Tell me, how am I humiliating?" He moved closer to her ear and deliberately said in a quiet voice, "Sister-in-law."

Wei Luo face sank. She raised her hand up towards his face.

This time, Li Song had experience. In the moment before her hand slapped his face, he grabbed her wrist. He said with a smile, "What? You want to slap me again? Are the wounds that you left



on my body too few?" He placed Wei Luo's hand on his face. "Here." As he said this, he moved her hand down from his cheek to his chin to his chest, "Here..." Then, he shifted her hand to the left and heavily pressed down for a moment. "And also here. Wei Luo, you're so talented. You've injured me so many times, but I don't want to kill you at all."

Wei Luo's eyes were calm like a lake without any ripples." That's because you deserve it."

"Right, I deserve it." Li Song lightly laughed. He lowered his head and buried it between her shoulder and neck to closely cling to her body's faint scent. "I deserve it for provoking you. I deserve it for feeling softhearted towards you. I deserve it... for liking you..."

Then, he opened his mouth and viciously bit down on her neck.

Wei Luo gasped in cold anger and went all out in her struggle, but Li Song seemed to have lost his senses. He tightly bound her hands and wouldn't let her move. Fortunately, they were at the innermost part of the hallway and most people wouldn't be able to see this area. Most of the guests downstairs were attentively listening to the ping tan. No one paid attention to what was happening in this nook.

Wei Luo's neck felt painful. It even felt as if he had bitten hard enough to draw blood. She gnashed her teeth and cursed, "Li Song, you're crazy."

Li Song didn't refute. He also felt that he had gone crazy. Since the time that he had seen her in Zhao Yang Hall, he kept thinking about her pomegranate dress and her bright smiling expression when he returned home. He had actually gone to her and Zhao Jie's wedding, but he didn't enter Prince Jing's residence. He only stood outside and looked at them. He saw her as she came down from the bridal sedan, held the red ribbon, and was led into Prince Jing's residence by Zhao Jie.

At the time, he wanted to viciously bite her neck until it broke, so

that she couldn't marry anyone else and would never forget him.

Li Song suddenly felt a terrifying wind blowing from behind him that carried surging fury. He could guess who had come. His teeth left Wei Luo's neck, but he didn't let go her. Instead, his tongue came out to lick her wound. He said with a smile, "I became crazy a long time ago."

A hand wrapped around Li Song's neck and he was lifted up from behind.

Zhao Jie grasped his neck. The blue veins on the back of Zhao Jie's hand were raised and he suddenly clenched his fingers closed. It seemed as if he would break Li Song's neck in the next moment. Zhao Jie's eyebrows were soaked in a layer of anger and there was a chilly, threatening aura around his body. Before Wei Luo could clearly see his action, he had thrown Li Song from the second floor!

The people on the first floor had been listening to the ping tan with keen interest, but a person suddenly fell from the sky and landed onto the stage with a thump!

The man and woman on the stage were startled. They took several steps back while holding their instruments. The spectators below the stage were also quite shocked. Someone even went forward to check if Li Song was still breathing amidst the confusion.

As Li Song fell down, he had taken the opportunity to grab the curtain on the stage. Cushioned by the curtain had been completely torn down by him, it wasn't likely for the fall to have killed him. However, he was still injured. His back had painfully collided against an eight immortal-style table. Li Song slightly moved, coughed, and saw that blood had come out from his mouth.

He raised his eyes to look at the second floor of the teahouse. There wasn't anyone there.

He powerlessly closed his eyes and his lips curved up into a mocking smile. In the end, he could only use that the type of method to ensure that Wei Luo would remember him.

If he had known that he would fall into this current predicament back when he was eight years old, he definitely wouldn't have pushed Wei Chang Hong into the lake or shot that arrow at Wei Luo.

He would have found her and given the best of everything to her.

He truly wished that he could have shown his affection for her in a nice way.

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On the other side, Zhao Jie had used his cloak to wrap Wei Luo up and was taking her out through the teahouse's backdoor. As he walked, he ordered Zhu Geng, "Bring Liuli out from the teahouse and directly send her back to the palace. Tell her that Wei Luo is with me and that she doesn't need to worry." Then, he narrowed his eyes and added, "Cut off the tongues of the people that saw that scene and deliver them to Li Song."

As for Li Song... he would personally deal with him.

Zhu Geng knew that Zhao Jie meant the female singer and Li Song's personal servant boy. He made a noise in acknowledgement, turned around, and disappeared.

There was a prince's carriage parked behind the teahouse. Zhao Jie normally didn't ride in carriages. This carriage was prepared for Wei Luo and Zhao Liuli. Zhao Jie carried Wei Luo into the carriage and ordered the driver to return to Prince Jing's residence.

Zhao Jie opened the cloak that Wei Luo was wrapped in. The obvious teeth mark on her white jade-like neck was very conspicuous.

Zhao Jie's gaze became cold and his expression sunk. His left

hand clenched into a fist. His entire body radiated a terrifying fury.

Wei Luo raised her eyes and met his line of sight.

Wei Luo's round eyes were clear and clean. They were clever and cunning. Zhao Jie restrained the anger in his heart. He lifted his right hand, gently touched her wound, and asked, "Does it hurt?"

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Of course it hurt.

It was impossible for the bite to not hurt. She felt as if Li Song had almost bitten off a piece of her flesh. When she thought about the words that Li Song had said, she controlled herself and stayed silent.

But, seeing the anger and remorse in Zhao Jie's eyes. Wei Luo decided that it wouldn't be a good idea to say the truth. So she only shook her head and said, "It doesn't hurt."

Zhao Jie held her in his arms, took out a silk handkerchief from her sleeve, and wiped at the teeth mark as he ordered the driver to drive faster. A short time later, the carriage stopped in front of Prince Jing's residence. Zhao Jie carried Wei Luo into the residence and ordered the steward to take his token and use it to request an imperial doctor. His expression hadn't been good from beginning to end. It was very terrifying. Even though the steward had been at serving at Zhao Jie's side for a long time, he couldn't help feeling scared and behaving more carefully than useful.

When the imperial doctor hastily arrived, he thought that Princess Consort Jing had fallen sick from an incurable disease. He was so anxious that his forehead kept sweating.

He didn't expect to see Wei Luo sitting on a rosewood couch and looking as if there wasn't anything wrong with her. She was brightly smiling and her almond-shaped eyes were curved into two crescents.

Wei Luo ordered Jin Lu, "Jin Lu, go and pour a cup of tea for Imperial Doctor Zhang. He looks tired. Look at how his forehead is covered in sweat."

It wasn't strange that Wei Luo was acting so magnanimous. It was because Zhao Jie looked too anxious. She had originally been

very angry, but seeing that Zhao Jie was even angrier than her, her anger disappeared.

How could Imperial Doctor Zhang dare to drink tea at this time? After hearing Prince Jing explain Wei Luo's situation, he sighed in relief and said, "Your Highness, please raise your head so that this servant can examine you."

Wei Luo obediently raised her head.

The teeth mark had already become swollen on the slender white jade-like neck and looked rather malevolent. Imperial Doctor Zhang looked at it left and right, then he shook his head and said, "This servant will prescribe some anti-inflammatory medicine to decreased the inflammation... But the wound is too deep. I'm afraid that it'll scar."

Zhao Jie's face sank. He coldly said, "Is there no way to remove it?" He didn't want someone else's mark to be left on Wei Luo's body, especially a teeth mark. Moreover, the teeth mark was on her neck. If she wore thinner clothing during summer, other people would easily be able to see the mark. Wei Luo was a girl that loved beauty. She definitely wouldn't want a scar on her body. If there was slightest chance, he didn't want this teeth mark to remain.

Fortunately, after Imperial Doctor Zhang considered for a while, he nodded and said, "There is a very good medicine called su ji san (whitening powder). A foreign nation had given this medicine to His Majesty as a tribute in the previous year. Later on, His Majesty gave it to Noble Consort Ning. Not only can the medicine reduce swelling, it can also nourish the skin to make it look more youthful. However, there was only one bottle. I'm not sure if Noble Consort Ning still has it..."

After hearing these words, Zhao Jie said to Zhu Geng, "Bring me a brush and paper. This prince will personally write a letter to Noble Consort Ning."

Zhu Geng brought the brush and paper. Zhao Jie wrote a few sentences, then he told Zhu Geng to deliver it into the palace.

In addition to this, Imperial Doctor Zhang also mentioned dietary restrictions. "It'll be the best if Your Highness doesn't eat seafood during this period. If you cover the wound with a hot towel, the swelling will go down."

On the side, Jin Lu and Bai Lan listened to his words and stored each word into their memory.

An hour after Imperial Doctor Zhang was sent away, Zhu Geng came back from the palace. He brought back a white porcelain bottle that was decorated with blue sparrows and plum blossoms. "Your Highness, this is yu ji san."

Zhao Jie was sitting next to Wei Luo. He took off the hot towel from Wei Luo's neck and took the porcelain bottle. "Did the noble consort say anything?"

Zhu Geng said, "After Noble Consort Ning found out about the princess consort's condition, she ordered people to bring the medicine on the spot. She also asked how the princess consort got injured. This subordinate said that a wild cat bit the princess consort. Noble Consort Ning didn't ask any further questions."

Zhao Jie nodded and saw that the teeth mark's swelling had decreased. He poured the ointment into his palm and rubbed it between his hands, then he applied it on the wound.

At first, the ointment felt cold. Soon after, there was a faint tingling sensation that became an acute pain as if insects were burrowing into her skin. Wei Luo tried to pull away and retreat.

In a coaxing tone, Zhao Jie said, "Don't move."

Wei Luo looked at him. After pondering something, she asked, "Since Noble Consort Ning gave us this ointment, shouldn't we send her a gift too?"

Zhao Jie faintly curved his thin lips. His phoenix eyes looked at

her. "What do you want to give her?"

Wei Luo seriously considered. Since Noble Consort Ning lived in the palace, she had probably seen countless treasures. She wouldn't value gold and silvery jewelry. Silk fabric wasn't sincere enough. Moreover, Empress Chen and Noble Consort Ning didn't have a good relationship. Empress Chen was her mother-in-law. If she gave Noble Consort Ning something that was too valuable, it would be like slapping Empress Chen's face. She thought about this back and forth. Selecting an appropriate gift really required a lot of thought.

Wei Luo went through the items in her dowry, but she didn't know what to give her.

Seeing that she was distressed, Zhao Jie smiled and said, "If you obediently finish using this medicine, I'll take you to the storeroom to select a gift. You can give whatever item that catches your eye."

Wei Luo's eyes shined. She nodded in agreement.

Wei Luo hadn't seen the storeroom in Prince Jing's residence yet. Before Wei Luo married Zhao Jie, first madam and fourth madam had taught her how to manage the household and the accounts. She spent three months learning about this and gradually mastered it. She didn't expect that Zhao Jie would worry about tiring her out and wouldn't let her manage these matters. He still had the steward directly managing the residence. Then, every month the steward would report the major events and trifle matters to her.

As a result, Wei Luo could relax and stay happily idle.



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However, Wei Luo didn't expect that Zhao Jie would turn out to be such a low-key person. Although he was a person that usually hid his thoughts and behavior, there were numerous treasures hidden in the storeroom.

Wei Luo stood at the storeroom's entrance and glanced around. There were ancient calligraphy and paintings messily placed in the storeroom. When she casually picked them up to see, they were either the genuine work of famous artists from the past dynasty or rare treasures from the current dynasty. Each of them was worth over a thousand gold.

The sight overwhelmed Wei Luo. She took out a painting that was gilded with gold from a bamboo scroll tube that had been in the storeroom's cobweb-filled corner. She opened the scroll to see. It was the famous painting by Huang Yi, "Wintersweet and Wintry Crows", from the previous dynasty. It was said that this painting had disappeared a long time ago. Even an imitation of this painting was difficult to find in the world, much less the authentic painting. And Zhao Jie had casually flung it in a corner of the storeroom?

Wei Luo carefully looked at the inscription on the scroll painting. It was undoubtedly Old Master Huang Yi's seal. She lowered her head and looked at the bamboo scroll tube. An image of a landscape with a pavilion was carved onto the bamboo scroll tube.

There was only person in this world that liked to store paintings in bamboo scroll tubes. Unfortunately, the old master had only painted three paintings. One of them was buried with him. The other was in the emperor's study. Zhao Jie had actually left the third one forgotten in a storeroom's cobweb-filled corner.

For a moment, Wei Luo looked at Zhao Jie in different light.

Wei Luo walked to an eight treasure shelf and selected a precious coral to pick up. She asked, "What's this?"

Zhao Jie said, "Imperial grandmother gave this to me. It's blood coral, the best type of red coral."

Wei Luo silently placed the item back and asked about another item, "What about this flower arrangement base?"

Zhao Jie said, "This flower arrangement base is made of red and white agate craved that was carved into a Pisces pattern."

Wei Luo blew off the dust on a light golden-colored gourd-shaped item, "What's the origin of this item?"

Zhao Jie glanced at it and explained, "It's just an ivory-colored tray with decorative cravings that was given by a court minister. Its origin isn't significant."

Wei Luo, "..."

So much treasure! And he was actually wrecking all of them like this!

Wei Luo circled the storeroom again. Every item was well known. They were all rare treasure that other people couldn't even get if they begged for them. But, Zhao Jie piled them up in the storeroom like they were radishes and cabbages. If Wei Luo didn't come here to look around today, who knows how long they would continue to be buried? Wei Luo even wanted to stretch her hand out to scratch Zhao Jie. "How could you treat these items so poorly?"

Zhao Jie laughed and said, "There was no one to take care of them before. I don't like to place too many items in the rooms, so I left all of them here. If you like, you can have the servants take them out and clean them. You can place them wherever you like."

These words suited Wei Luo's intention.

There were so many treasures. She had to carefully organize them. But, when she thought about it again, she remembered that she was here to select a thank you present for Noble Consort Ning. She looked around. She was unwilling to part with anything and

didn't want to give any of it away.

Wei Luo felt that the decision had become even more difficult after she came to the storeroom.

In the end, it took her a long time before she selected a pair of mandarin ducks with lotus flowers agate paperweight and a golden-colored warming ink box with dragon patterns on six sides. She reluctantly said, "Let's give these two items. I heard that Noble Consort Ning likes to paint. These two items could be considered a good match."

Zhao Jie stroked her head and seemed rather ruefully as he said, "My Ah Luo has grown up and understands the ways of the world."

Wei Luo waved his hand away and looked at him strangely. What did he mean by this? She wasn't a fool. Noble Consort Ning had given her a very good medicine. How would it be okay if she didn't send gifts back in return?

Several days after the servants delivered the gifts, the teeth mark on Wei Luo's neck started to gradually fade. According to Imperial Doctor Zhang, as long as she persisted in applying su ji san, the teeth mark would completely disappear.

Hearing these words, Zhao Jie's complexion finally improved.

In addition, the weather had become colder as winter approached, so Wei Luo was wearing thicker clothing and the average person wouldn't notice that there was something strange with Wei Luo's neck. Today, Wei Luo received news that first madam had engaged Wei Chang Yin to Marquis Ping Yuan's daughter, Liang Yu Rong.

Marquis Ping Yuan and his wife didn't agree to the engagement at first. Although the treatment for Wei Chang Yin's leg had started, it might not be completely successful. What would they do if they married their daughter to him and found out that the treatment for his leg wasn't successful? As a result, Marquis Ping Yuan's wife

hesitated for a long time. The couple didn't agree until Wei Chang Yin personally visited them at their residence and said very sincere and passionate words.

As for the exact words that Wei Chang Yin said, it wasn't known.

Liang Yu Rong wouldn't suffer the slightest bit by marrying Wei Chang Yin. The title of Duke Ying was hereditary. If Wei Chang Yin's leg could be successfully treated, as the legal son of the first branch, he would definitely inherit this title after his father. When that happened, Liang Yu Rong would be Duke Ying's wife. This new status would be far higher than her current status as a marquis's daughter.

That meant that Liang Yu Rong would be the one that was getting a bargain. If Wei Chang Yin's leg recovered, there would definitely be many people who would want to marry him. At that time, Marquis Ping Yuan's wife wouldn't be looking down on this marriage anymore.

When Wei Luo heard this news, she felt very happy for Liang Yu Rong and moved by their story.

Liang Yu Rong and Wei Chang Yin's ending had been so tragic in her past life. Many things had changed in this lifetime, so it was only natural that they would end up together. It really made her feel utterly delighted.

Liang Yu Rong and Wei Chang Yin's wedding was scheduled for the second month of the next year. The timing was a bit rushed since Wei Chang was half a year older than Zhao Jie. In the past, his marriage had been delayed because of his leg. Now, that the matter of his wife was settled, first madam naturally wanted him to marry Liang Yu Rong sooner and have children for House Wei.

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Counting the days, Wei Luo hadn't seen Liang Yu Rong in a long time.

After Wei Luo married Zhao Jie, she could no longer be as free as when she was an unmarried girl. There were more things for her to worry about and she interacted less with the girls from other noble families. But, Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong's friendship hadn't changed. Now that Liang Yu Rong was engaged to Wei Chang Yin, Wei Luo would have to call her cousin-in-law in the future. As soon as Wei Luo thought of Liang Yu Rong's little smiling face, Wei Luo almost couldn't say that word out loud. How happy was that girl feeling right now?

Wei Luo smiled. She was sitting at a vermillion-lacquered rectangle table inlaid with gold and carved with spirals and holding a brush to write a letter.

Her limpid almond-shaped eyes and soft, pink lips were curved into a smiling expression. She rarely felt this happy.

Zhao Jie glanced at her nearby figure and put down the "Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government " that he was holding to support his chin. "Who are you so happy to write a letter to?"

(T/N: "Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government " is a compilation of a collective history of China that was created in the Song Dynasty.)

After Wei Luo finished writing the last word and sealed the letter with wax, she didn't hide anything from him, "I'm writing to Yu Rong. The weather is pretty good recently so I want to go to Qian Temple that's outside of the capital with her. We can stroll around and make a wish to Buddha while we're there."

Zhao Jie raised the tip of his eyebrow and slowly and deliberately

said, "Oh. How come I didn't know that there was something you're wishing for? How about telling husband what the wish is? Buddha might not be able to help you, but husband will definitely be able to help you fulfill your wish."

Wei Luo handed the letter to Jin Lu, walked to his side, and said, "Did big brother forget? When first aunt went to Qian Temple last time to make a wish that oldest cousin Chang Yin's leg would be fixed, you gave us the bamboo stick. This was how first aunt was able to see Great Master Qing Wang."

With this reminder, Zhao Jie remembered and proceeded to say with a smile, "Of course I remember. That was where this prince kissed you for the first time."

Seeing that he wasn't being serious, Wei Luo didn't reply to his words. She only continued to chatter on, "Since Yu Rong is engaged to oldest cousin Chang Yin, there isn't anything wrong with her burning incenses and paying respect to Buddha for House Wei. Besides, I haven't seen her in a long time. I want to take this opportunity to have a long conversation with her..."

Zhao Jie wasn't swayed by these words. He wasn't interested in the activities of women and children. He pinched Wei Luo's cheek and said, "We haven't been married for a long period of time yet and you're going to abandon your husband to hangout with another person? Aren't you afraid that I won't agree?"

Wei Luo wrapped her arms around his neck from behind and her soft, fair, and rosy face moved to his front. She blinked and looked at him with her limpid eyes, "Are you really going to say no?"

These words were very sly. If he didn't agree, it would seem like he was committing an unpardonable crime. Zhao Jie held back his laughter and asked, "Is there a reason why I have to agree?"

Wei Luo knew what he wanted. He was saying these words because he wanted her to fawn over him. And so, she kissed his face with a smacking sound. In a sweet and crisp voice, she asked,

"Is this okay?"

Zhao Jie chuckled, "Not sincere enough."

Wei Luo could only go down until she reached his thin lips. After hesitating for a moment, she opened her mouth to hold his lips and copied his usual action of slowly sucking. In the end, his phoenix eyes calmly looked at her with a smiling expression as if he was asking, "Are you only capable of this?"

Wei Luo closed her eyes. At this time, she could only throw away her pride and wholeheartedly fawn over him. She imagined him as a piece of silk nest candy and drew him into her mouth to slowly eat. When she felt that Zhao Jie was breathing heavier and heavier, she released him with a blushing face. Her large eyes weren't calm. They were full of spring seductiveness.

Wei Luo expectantly looked at Zhao Jie, "Can I go out?" If he still said no, then she was really at her wit's end.

With one hand, Zhao Jie brought the rest of her body in front of him. As he held her waist, he said, "Husband has an idea..." Seeing Wei Luo's small red face, he lowered his head to touch her forehead and lifted his hand to gently caress her lips. His eyes were a deep black.

Wei Luo naturally had to ask, "What idea?"

And then, Zhao Jie pressed her down.

In the study, there was a vermillion-lacquered desk that was carved with birds of prey and clouds that was blocking the view. There was only the view of Zhao Jie properly sitting behind the desk. His attire was neat and he looked like a noble character in all details. However, his expression showed that he was silently restraining his emotions.

Moreover, a delicate voice reprimanded, "It's daytime. What if someone comes into the room?"

Zhao Jie's eyes dimmed and he appeased her worries by saying,

"No one would dare to enter without this prince's order. If someone trespasses, this prince will kill him."

Wei Luo didn't say another word.

The study was quiet for a long time until Zhao Jie inhaled and hoarsely said, "Ah Luo, you're killing me..."

Outside the door, Zhu Geng and Yang Hao was standing ramrod straight and attentively looking in front. The two of them looked calm, but their minds had lost calmness a long time ago. The prince and princess consort could really fool around. It was broad daylight and they were in the study. Did they not consider their feelings at all? Although they silently cursed them and there was sweat on their foreheads, they didn't dare to go inside and bother them.

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The next day, Wei Luo fiercely glared at Zhao Jie when she was going out.

After she did that for him yesterday, her mouth was feeling sore until even now . It was entirely his fault for insisting on an unpleasant requirement. She was only going out for a trip, but he watched over her like a mother-in-law. However, Zhao Jie's attitude this morning was indeed very good. Not only did he personally feed her breakfast, he also touched up her eyebrow makeup for her.

Of course, Zhao Jie's attempt wasn't presentable. Not only was his attempt meandering like an earthworm, he almost drew Wei Luo a unibrow. Wei Luo laughed as soon as she saw herself in the mirror. After she ordered Jin Lu to wipe away the makeup away and redraw, she said to Zhao Jie, "I used to think big brother was talented at everything. I finally found something that you can't do."

Zhao Jie raised two fingers and lightly tapped her head, "If I was



good at applying makeup, you should find that more worrying."

That was true. Wei Luo couldn't resist bursting out in laughter at the idea.

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"Ah Luo, you've been smiling since you entered the carriage. How about telling me why you're feeling so happy?" Liang Yu Rong moved closer to her and asked with teasing expression.

Wei Luo looked at Liang Yu Rong. She didn't blush from embarrassment after hearing her teasing tone. After all, she had already heard a plentiful amount of shameful words from being together with Zhao Jie. Her face had already thickened into an impenetrable defense.

She said, "What's there for me to say? I haven't even asked you about your matter with oldest cousin Chang Yin. I heard that oldest cousin Chang Yin personally paid a visit to Marquis Ping Yuan's residence. What did he say to make your parents change their minds so quickly?"

As expected, Liang Yu Rong's face turned red. She pinched Wei Luo's waist and said, "How... How would I know? Daddy and mother never discuss my marriage with me."

Wei Luo skeptically looked at her. In the end, Liang Yu Rong was so embarrassed that she pounced on Wei Luo. The two of them messily landed on top of a blanket that was embroidered with golden clouds and birds. Their laughter never stopped and the subject of their conversation was dropped.

When they arrived at Qian Temple's entrance, the temple was strangely empty. It was especially quiet and peaceful without the normal worshippers that were as numerous as clouds.

There was a row of black-robed guards standing outside of the temple and the footsteps of the monks inside the temple were very quiet as if they were receiving an important guest. The young monk at the entrance originally wanted to stop them from going inside, but he hesitated after Wei Luo's identity was told to him. It wouldn't be good to offend either side. And so, he said,

"Benefactors, please follow me."

Wei Luo and Liang Yu Rong walked into the main hall and saw a madam kneeling in front of the solemn and stately Buddha statue. She was wearing a deep red robe with wide sleeves and embroidered with a pattern of lotus flowers. Her hair was arranged in a qing hairstyle. There were two golden hairpins that had cat's eye gemstones inserted at an angle into her hair. Just from looking at her back figure, they could tell that she was undoubtedly a noble and glamorous madam. After that madam paid her respect to the Buddha statue by kowtowing three times, a girl that was wearing a cherry blossom-colored outer robe that was embroidered with lotus flowers in Su style helped her up. Then, they turned around and headed towards the entrance to leave.

Under the comfortably warm sunlight outside of the hall, Wei Luo finally saw the madam's face. It was Noble Consort Ning, who lived in Zhong Hua Palace.

Wei Luo blankly stared at her for a moment before she paid her respect to her senior by saluting and saying, "Your Highness, Noble Consort Ning."

Liang Yu Rong followed her and also saluted.

Noble Consort Ning was one generation above them after all, so she had experienced more things and her conduct was more composed and mature than their's. She didn't show much surprise and only said with a faint smile, "I didn't expect to meet you here. It seems that I have quite a bit of fate with Princess Consort Jing."

Wei Luo closed her eyes slightly and pursed her lips into a smile. "Many thanks to your wondrous medicine from last time, Your Highness. My wound was only able to heal so quickly because of it."

She paused before adding, "Prince Jing's residence has been preoccupied with many trifling issues, so I haven't been able to go to the palace and personally thank Your Highness. I'll have to ask

Your Highness to not blame me for this. I entrusted someone to deliver a paperweight and an ink-warming box. Has Your Highness received them?"

She wasn't actually busy with Prince Jing's residence's matters. Wei Luo was purely using it as an excuse. Since Zhao Jie and Empress Chen didn't like Noble Consort Ning, she naturally would avoid speaking to this person from an opposing faction.

Noble Consort Ning's smile was dignified and perfect. "That's not a big deal. It's only a bottle of medicine. Princess Consort Jing is so beautiful. If a scar was left on your body that would truly be a shame. Unfortunately, there's only one bottle of that medicine. I used almost half of it after His Majesty gave it to me. Was there enough left?"

Wei Luo nodded and her smile didn't change. "It was enough. Thank you for your consideration, Your Highness."

Noble Consort Ning nodded and the girl at her side finally had a chance to salute Wei Luo. Her soft voice was pleasing to hear, "Imperial sister-in-law."

The girl raised her head. Her bright eyes were her most dazzling aspect. There were only a faintly ripples in them. They were like deep pools of limpid water. A beautiful nose and small cherry lips followed her exquisite eyes. Her potential beauty was something that was rarely seen. However, this wasn't what caught Wei Luo's attention. It was her address of, "imperial sister-in-law". She was probably Zhao Zhang's newly married princess consort. She was Duke Ding's first branch's youngest daughter, Gao Wan.

Wei Luo didn't have much of an impression of this girl. Perhaps, it was because her family didn't have many dealings with Duke Ding's family. She only remembered that she was a well behaved and had a gentle and warm personality.

Wei Luo hadn't been engaged to Zhao Jie for a long time before Zhao Zhang turned around and got engaged with Gao Wan. They

had also married a month earlier than her. There was an unavoidable intention of competition behind his actions, but no one said these words out loud.

Wei Luo went with Noble Consort Ning to the rear courtyard's guest room to talk for a while and found out that Noble Consort Ning wasn't feeling well, so she left the palace to come here to pay her respects to Buddha. Wei Lou said a few sentences to show concern, but she didn't say she would send Noble Consort Ning any medicine. After all, she had already paid back the favor from the bottle of medicine. Wei Luo also didn't want to have further contact with her.

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It was noon when they left Qian Temple. The sun was high up in the sky and the temperature naturally increased from the beams of sunlight.

After Wei Luo bid farewell to Liang Yu Rong, returned to Prince Jing's residence, asked a servant about Zhao Jie's location, found out that he was currently in the study, she started walking towards the study.

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When the servant said that Zhao Jie was in the study, Wei Luo didn't find it strange. She thought he was reading a book or handling official business. She didn't expect that when she walking into the study, she would see Zhao Jie sitting on an eight immortal style Chinese cedar chair with his left leg casually crossed over his right leg. One of his sleeves that were embroidered with a pattern of auspicious clouds was rolled up and his strong, powerful arm was exposed. He was holding a small box of graphite eyebrow powder and drawing something on his exposed arm.

Wei Luo walked closer and saw that there were varying lines of thickness and length. When she carefully looked at these small lines, she noticed that they were slightly curved and looked slightly similar to the eyebrow lines that he had drawn for her in the morning.

"Big brother, what are you doing?" Wei Luo asked.

Zhao Jie looked up and placed the graphite eyebrow powder on a nearby vermillion-lacquered Chinese cedar table. Seeing that she had returned, he faintly smiled, opened his arms, and said, "Back? Come here and let husband hug you."

Wei Luo walked forward and obediently went into his arms to let him hug her until his heart was content. She didn't forget about his previous actions. She pointed at the crooked lines on his arm and asked, "Why did you draw this?"

Zhao Jie picked her up, placed her on his leg, wrapped his arm around her soft, slender waist, and said with a smile, "Weren't you looking down on me because I couldn't draw eyebrows well? I thought I should start practicing now, so that I can draw eyebrows for you in the future."

Glib-tongued. Wei Luo wrinkled her little nose and looked at the lines left and right. She felt that he had improved a lot from this

morning, so she curiously asked, "Were you practicing this the entire afternoon? How do you know which type of eyebrow shape suits me?"

Zhao Jie grasped her tiny, pointy chin to face him and gently traced her eyebrows with his other hand. "How could I not know that Ah Luo has liu ye eyebrows? I only practiced for an hour. It wasn't long."

After he had finished handling his official work, he didn't have anything to do. He thought of Wei Luo's disdainful look this morning and got carried away by a whim. He ordered Zhu Geng to bring him graphite eyebrow powder. At first, he practiced on fine writing paper. Later, he decided that the paper wasn't close enough to skin, so he started drawing on his arm. Just after he tried a few attempts of drawing on his arm, Wei Luo returned. Zhao Jie didn't overlook the trace of unhappiness in Wei Luo's eyes. He lowered his head, kissed her little mouth, and said, "What's wrong? You don't seem happy. Who bullied our Ah Luo?"

Wei Luo didn't expect that his perception would be so keen. She thought she was hiding her mood very well without exposing any of her feelings. She wrapped her arms around Zhao Jie's neck, leaned against his chest, and said, "I met Noble Consort Ning and Princess Consort Qi when I went to Qian Temple today."

(T/N: Just like how Zhao Jie has a title of Prince Jing, Zhao Zhang's title is Prince Qi.)

Because fifth prince Zhao Zhang had handled the drought in the northwest well, he had been promoted to a first-rank prince by Emperor Zhong Chen in the previous year. After Duke Ding's family's Gao Wan married him, she naturally became Princess Consort Qi. In addition, an imperial doctor had recently determined that she was pregnant. There had been so many people going over to Prince Qi's residence to send their congratulations and gifts to the couple that his front doors were almost trampled down.

Now that she thought about it, Noble Consort Ning had brought Gao Wan to Qian Temple to burn incenses and worship Buddha for her own health and Gao Wan's unborn baby.

Zhao Jie didn't have much of a reaction. He calmly said, "Oh. What did you talk about?"

Wei Luo thought for a moment before truthfully saying, "Not much. We just exchanged conventional greetings. Noble Consort asked me if my injury had recovered, so I thanked her for giving me that bottle of su ji san. She wasn't feeling well. We didn't say much before they left. Princess Consort Qi's temperament seemed very good when we talked for a bit."

As Wei Luo talked with Zhao Jie, she also ordered Jin Lu to bring a bowl of warm water. After the warm water was brought over, she wet a towel and gently wiped away the eyebrow marks on Zhao Jie's arm. She continued to say, "Noble Consort Ning also said a few concerned words about your situation."

Zhao Jie curved his lips into a fake smile and said, "How did you respond?"

Wei Luo lowered her long and thick eyelashes. They fluttered like two little fans. "I naturally answered truthfully that you're very healthy."

After a while, Wei Luo finished wiping cleaning his arm, put down his rolled up sleeve, and raised her head to look at him as she said, "Princess Consort Qi said that Princess Consort Yong An recently gave birth to her first son. In a few days, it'll be his first month birthday. She invited me to go with her to his birthday celebration."

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As Zhao Jie enjoyed the feeling of Wei Luo taking care of him, he



held a smile in his mouth and said, "What would you like to do? If you don't want to go, I can directly send over a present and you can stay home instead."

Wei Luo thought for a moment, then she said, "It's better if I go. After all, your relationships with other people are so lacking. I should at least strive to improve it a little bit. If I don't go, there won't be anyone left in the capital that wants to have any dealings with you."

These words weren't false. Zhao Jie's relationship with the other people really wasn't very good. He had a naturally indifferent and unreasonable disposition and was very taciturn in front of other people. If he smiled at a person, it was already bestowing him or her a great gift. In addition, his reputation wasn't good either. He was shrewd and unwaveringly ruthless when handling official business. The people in the capital had given him the title of "King of Hell" a long time ago. Other than the court ministers that were his supporters, none of the aristocratic families were willing to have any extraneous dealings with him. They were afraid that a moment of carelessness would provoke him. If he had a grudge against you, it would be difficult to preserve the lives of your family members from the oldest person to the youngest.

Since Wei Luo had already married Zhao Jie, she wasn't willing for him to have too many enemies. If she drew the court ministers' wives to her side, she would be able to slightly improve his reputation. This way, his reputation wouldn't become worse and worse.

Even though Wei Luo didn't like attending these events where there were shams of politeness, she would still go.

## Chapter 133.2

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On the day of Prince Yong An's heir's one month birthday, Wei Luo and Zhao Jie went to sixth prince's residence.

Princess Consort Yong An had previously given birth to two daughters. Now that she had finally given birth to a son, Prince Yong An Xue Rong placed a huge importance on this son. He had organized a banquet and invited all of the important high-ranking court officials and aristocratic families. The occasion was very lively. As soon as a person entered the residences, they could feel a strong sense of joy.

Zhao Jie and Wei Luo's carriage stopped at the residence's inner gate. Wei Luo held Jin Lu's hand for support as she came down from the carriage. As soon as she lifted her head, she saw Princess Consort Qi Gao Wan in front of her. Gao Wan was wearing a moonlight-colored outer robe embroidered with a pattern of golden lotus flowers. Gao Qing Yang was next to her. She was wearing an autumn-colored jacket and skirt. Gao Qing Yang and Gao Wan were cousins on their paternal side of the family.

They had bumped into each other by coincidence and it wasn't unreasonable for them to walk together. But, as Wei Luo looked Gao Qing Yang's expression, she could see that Gao Qing Yang wasn't very close to her paternal cousin.

As Gao Wan was talking with Gao Qing Yang, she saw Wei Luo and hastily revealed a smile. She waited until Wei Luo had walked closer before saying, "Imperial sister-in-law, I was just speaking about you to Qing Yang. I didn't expect that you would be behind us. It seems that I really can't talk about people behind their backs."

Gao Wan had a naturally smiling expression on her oval-shaped face and almond-shaped eyes. She naturally looked very lovable. If they weren't on different sides, Wei Luo could have probably been

her friend.

Wei Luo politely conversed with her, "What were you saying about me?"

Gao Wan deliberately looked behind Wei Luo. Seeing that Zhao Jie hadn't come, she finally said with a smile, "My words can be a bit too frank. Imperial sister-in-law, don't think too much about them."

She held Wei Luo's hand and drew her closer. As they walked towards the inner courtyard, she said, "I just feel that you're too different from Prince Jing. Prince Jing is so cold-hearted and you seem so amicable and approvable. You look so delicate and soft as if you could break with a snap. I'm worried that Prince Jing mistreats you in private."

Amiable and approachable. This was the first time that someone described Wei Luo with these words. Wei Luo smiled and her voice was calm as she said, "Older brother Prince Jing treats me very well."

Gao Wan naturally didn't believe her and thought that Wei Luo was only saying these words to preserve Zhao Jie's reputation. Besides, who would say her husband wasn't good in public? Wouldn't that be the same as slapping your own face?"

Gao Wan didn't take Wei Luo's words to heart.

The three of them walked into the reception pavilion.

Princess Consort Yong An led the group of madams in saluting Wei Luo and Gao Wan and invited them to sit in the seats of honor. Her attitude was very modest. After all, Prince Yong An was only an outer prince. Back then, he had been bestowed the title of prince because he had supported the founder of the dynasty during the establishment of this dynasty. Now that many years had past, he didn't have much power and was only an empty shell. This was why Princess Consort Yong An had to be at her best when she was

facing the princess consorts of first ranked princes.

Princess Consort Yong An said, "Your Highnesses, it's my dear son's honor that you graced us with your esteemed presences by attending this gathering at my shabby residence."

Then, she turned her head and ordered the wet nurse to bring the little heir forward. She pursed her lips into a smile and said, "This delicate child became ill right after he was born. Your Highnesses, please don't be annoyed by the sound of his crying."

Gao Wan was calm and quiet in front of the crowd, without any of her earlier strange behavior, "How could that be? I like little children the best."

The wet nurse brought the little heir forward. Wei Luo looked at him. The little fellow was exquisitely cute with big, round eyes, pouting pink lips, and a fine little nose. No wonder Princess Consort Yong An smiled as she soon as she saw him. He was very much a child than easily garnered love and affection.

Gao Wan liked the child enough that she almost didn't want to part with him. She held him in her arms and coaxed him. "This little fellow is really good-looking. I wonder if my future child will be as beautiful as him."

Gao Wan had only married one month before Wei Luo and was already diagnosed with pregnancy.

Princess Consort Yong An flatteringly complimented her, "Your Highness, your child with Prince Qi will naturally be outstanding with a dragon's talent and a phoenix's appearance."

Gao Wan smiled and didn't express an opinion.

"Imperial sister-in-law, you should look at him too. He's so lovable when he smiles." Gao Wan walked to Wei Luo's front while carrying the baby.

Wei Luo put down a colorful teacup lid and didn't brush away Gao Wan's attempt. She stretched her hand out and touched that

child's cheek. This little fellow unexpectedly wrapped his hand around her finger and moved her finger into his mouth.

Wei Luo froze for a moment before instinctively pulling her hand back.

Princess Consort Yong An hurriedly took the child into her arms and moved him away. She tried to lighten the mood by joking, "Dearest child seems to really like Princess Consort Jing."

Wei Luo's finger was stained with the child's saliva. She didn't say much. "It's fine. He's still young." Jin Lu used a silk handkerchief to wipe Wei Luo's hand.

Wei Luo couldn't help thinking. What would her future children with Zhao Jie be like? She hadn't thought about this issue before. After all, she had only recently married Zhao Jie. But, now after seeing someone's recently born child and Gao Wan was also pregnant, it was hard to avoid thinking about this topic.

Afterwards, Princess Consort Yong An ordered someone to bring the little heir back inside and led Wei Luo, Gao Wan, and the other other people to view the plum blossoms in the rear courtyard.

Prince Yong An's residence had a garden with plum trees that blossomed earlier than other places. It had only recently turned to winter, but the plum flowers had blossomed one after another on the plum trees. The branches were all full of flowers.

Not long after, it started to become windy. Princess Consort was worried that the guests would feel cold, so she suggested that they go inside a nearby building to sit.

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With only half a day's effort, Wei Luo left behind a favorable impression among the noble madams and won over a lot of goodwill. She wasn't arrogant or hot-tempered and she seemed well educated. She was also witty and ingenious. However, they couldn't help sighing. She was such a good girl, but she had been

married off to Prince Jing, the "King of Hell". Who knows how much suffering she endured each day?

# Chapter 134.1

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Wei Luo naturally didn't know that these madams thought this way.

She had heard that Duke Ying's household had also been invited as guests. First Master Wei Min and Fifth Master Wei Kun had been among the people in House Wei, who had come to celebrate. Wei Chang Yin and Wei Chang Hong had also come. She wondered if she would be able to see them in the future.

Although Wei Luo had only recently married, she grew up with close relatives at her side. If she couldn't see them today, she would miss them dearly.

Unfortunately, this Princess Consort Yong An was very warm in her hospitality. Not only did she order the servant girls to bring fruits and pastries, she also invited her and Gao Wan to play ma diao. Wei Luo wasn't interested in this game. The only two things that interested her right now were Zhao Jie and her family. Besides, she had never played ma diao before. She always felt that this was something only irresponsible madams would do. As they played ma diao, they would gossip about other families. And so, she shook her head and said, "You two play. I'll watch from the side."

(T/N: Majong evolved from ma diao during Qing Dynasty. Unlike majong, it's a semi-cooperative game of three people against the fourth player that acts as the banker.

Gao Wan had already sat down at the flat-surfaced beech table inlaid in gold. When she heard Wei Luo's words, she looked at her and said, "It's not fun to just watch. Imperial sister-in-law, come play with us. I'm very good at this game."

Wei Luo smiled, "Is that right? Then, all the more reason I shouldn't play. If I lose to you, I'll lose face as your elder sister-in-law."

"Is that it? I'll go easy on you then." Gao Wan insistently pulled Wei Luo to the ma diao table. There were four players in this game. Besides Gao Wan and Wei Luo, the other two people were Princess Consort Yong An and Gao Qing Yang.

There were a total of forty tiles in ma diao. There were four suits of tiles: eleven coins, nine strings of coins, nine myriads of string, and eleven myriads. Each person was given eight tiles. In counter-clockwise rotation, they would each play a tile. The highest tile would win each round. The end goal was to defeat the banker.

Since Gao Wan was skilled in this game, she would be the banker in the first game. Because Princess Consort was deliberately trying to allow her to win, Wei Luo didn't understand the right strategy at the moment, and only Gao Qing Yang was blocking her; Gao Wan won the game as the banker.

As Gao Wan gathered together the gaming chips, she said with a smile, "Imperial sister-in-law, is this the first time you're playing this game? Your actions seem very inexperienced."

Wei Luo honestly nodded and said, "I haven't played this game before."

Gao Wan put forth high stakes and the other people could only follow. Wei Luo didn't mind, but Princess Consort Yong An was somewhat pained. These inner court madams all had set monthly allowances, even a princess consort. Besides, her husband was only an outer prince. Their declining household was actually hard-pressed for money. After only a few games, Princess Consort Yong An left the game and someone else took her place.

Wei Luo gradually understood the game better. She was clever to begin with and learned things quickly. The situation gradually reversed so that her side was winning. After Wei Luo won three rounds, Gao Wan's expression started to become slightly worried.

Before the last game, Gao Wan had a servant girl place all of the gaming chips onto the table. A small jade fish, a pair of jade



bracelets, and two pearls from the south sea were also added. She said, "If imperial sister-in-law can win this game, I'll give you these items."

Wei Luo had originally decided to stop playing. She didn't care about the gaming chips she lost. But when she thought about the chips she had initially lost, she sat back down again and said, "Okay, let's play one more game."

Wei Luo would be the banker in the last game. Gao Qing Yang was sitting next to Wei Luo and she also played very well. There were two crucial rounds where she played small tiles on her turn, so Wei Luo easily won those two rounds. Wei Luo would be winning this game without a doubt.

In a slight complaining tone, Gao Wan asked, "Older sister Qiner, why did you only play small tiles? Whose side are you actually on?"

(T/N: She's calling her sister instead of cousin to show closeness.)

Gao Qing Yang gave Wei Luo the rest of her gaming chips and lightly said, "I only had small tiles left in my hand."

Wei Luo won a lot of money. She turned her head to look at Gao Qing Yang. Previously, because she was Gai Dang Yang's younger sister, she hadn't thought much about her. But right now, she could see that Gao Qing Yang's appearance didn't lose at all to Gan Dan Yang. Her skin looked white and soft and her face looked like a beautiful apricot. She was even more beautiful than Gao Dan Yang.

Wei Luo searched through her mind. She remembered that when she was seven years old, she went to Xin Yan with Liang Yu Rong on Zhao Liuli's birthday. There had been a young girl that was arranging peanuts into a picture of "Wild Geese in Flight". She had gotten angry with them when Liang Yu Rong took her peanuts. So they had already met then, but hadn't seen each other since that day.

(T/N: This scene originally occurred in chapter 20. But, the text said it was Empress Chen's birthday and Wei Luo was the one that took her peanuts not Liang Yu Rong.)

After the group dispersed, some went to play tou hu (ancient party game of throwing arrows into a pot) and others went to admire flowers and chat. Gao Qing Yang wanted to play tou hu and Wei Luo wanted to go see Wei Kun and Chang Hong, so the two of them started walking downstairs.

In the stairwell, Wei Luo asked Gao Qing Yang, "Miss Gao, why did you let me win?"

Gao Qing Yang turned her head and froze for a moment in surprise.

Wei Luo smiled brightly. "I saw that you had a hundred myriad tile and a thousand myriad tile. If you had played these two tiles, I might not have won." She had said "might not have" instead of "couldn't". Wei Luo was very confident in herself.

Gao Qing Yang was silent for a moment. Her words didn't convey her meaning she said, "Your Highness, you secretly looked at this subject's tiles?"

Wei Luo shook her head. She wouldn't do a shady thing like that. "I paid attention when you put the tiles back in the pile and happened to see those two tiles."

Gao Qing Yang's expression eased, but then it subtly changed. With a controlled expression, she said, "This subject wanted to be slightly yielding since this was the first time Your Highness was playing ma diao."

Wei Luo really liked her answer. Gao Wan had said she would go easy on her at first, but she had forgotten everything once the game started and only cared about winning. Someone like Gao Qing Yang who could silently throw a game was rare. At minimum, it showed that this person was very careful, low-key, and wasn't

hasty with taking credits for her achievements.

## Chapter 134.2

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Wei Luo walked down the stairs with her. In front of Wei Luo and Gao Qing Yang, there was a group of young women gathered together in circle under a nearby plum tree and throwing arrows into a blue and white porcelain bottle that was at their center. Wei Luo saw a familiar figure sitting beneath a plum tree and she immediately became spirited.

Wei Chang Hong was leaning against a plum tree. He was surrounded by a riotous profusion of plum blossoms. The flower petals were falling down like raindrops. His hand was holding onto the tail feather of an arrow. After he aimed the arrow, he easily threw the arrow into the bottle.

Several young women sneakily looked at him, but he didn't show any reaction. His expression continued to be calm and indifferent. It was exactly because of this lofty coldness that the young women became even more fascinated with him. The more he ignored them, the more the young women wanted to attract his attention.

However, young women from noble families had restraint bred into their bones. Coupled with the upbringing they had since they were children, they only dared to sneakily glance at him despite their desire to attract his attention.

Wei Chang Hong looked up and saw Wei Luo at the entrance. His eyes slightly brightened and he said to the Department of Appointments' assistant minister's heir, who was next to him, "Excuse me, I have to leave."

But, the heir wouldn't let him leave. He insisted that Chang Hong finished the game first.

Chang Hong furrowed his eyebrows. There were still three more arrows in his hand. In one breath, he threw all three arrows into the bottle. Before the surrounding people could return to their senses, he had already left.

On the other side, Wei Luo was just about to walk forward. But a figure in yellow appeared out of nowhere and arrived in front of Wei Luo. Flustered and exasperated she shouted, "Wei Luo, stop!" Before Wei Luo could respond, she raised her hand and pelted it down like hail towards Wei Luo.

Wei Luo tilted her head and faced Li Xiang's furiously red eyes.

Wei Luo instinctively leaned back. Gao Qing Yang deftly grabbed Li Xiang's hand and raised her eyebrows. "Li Xiang, why are you acting so crazily?"

Prince Ru Yang's household hadn't been invited to his banquet, but Li Xiang had insisted on entering this residence. It wouldn't be good for the servants to stop her, so they could only look the other way and let her inside.

Li Xiang seemed to have been provoked by something. She fiercely glared at Wei Luo. "Was it you? You had to be the one that instigated older cousin Prince Jing into framing my father. My father is in prison right now. He might be sentenced to death. Are you happy?"

What was this nonsense? Although Wei Luo didn't know the full story, she couldn't influence Zhao Jie's actions. She expressionlessly looked at Li Xiang and coldly asked her, "Why would I have to anything to do with your father being in prison?"

Li Xiang's expression seemed slightly crazy. Disregarding everything, she said, "How is it not related to you? My father was framed. He didn't secretly stash weapons, much less have any intentions of rebelling. Older cousin Prince Jing deliberately framed him..."

Xu Zhou's prefectural magistrate had found a large quantity of weapons that Prince Ru Yang had hidden in Xu Zhou's southern mountain. Prince Ru Yang had already been caught and escorted back to the capital to await Emperor Chong Zhen's judgment. House Li only received the news of this yesterday. Li Xiang had

heard about this news from someone and firmly believed that Xu Zhou's prefectural magistrate was one of Zhao Jie's people and that everything was just Zhao Jie and Wei Luo's scheme. As soon as she heard that Wei Luo was at Prince Yong An's residence, she rushed over here.

As she said those words, she reached her hand out to grab Wei Luo and looked like a crazy girl that was going fight Wei Luo as if her life depended on it. Gao Qing Yang couldn't stop her.

Fortunately, Wei Chang Hong reached her in time. He grabbed her wrist and viciously tossed her to the ground. He coldly said, "Insane woman, you're spouting nonsense!"

Li Xiang's head coincidentally collided into a flowerpot on the side. The flowerpot cracked and the wound on her forehead started to bleed.

Li Xiang's servant girl helped her up. As she wiped the blood, she tried to persuade her, "Miss, let's go back...." Li Xiang would only be making a disgrace of herself if she stayed.

Li Xiang had indeed calmed down after being thrown onto the ground. She swayed left and right as she stood up. She glowered at Wei Luo and Wei Chang Hong, "Just you wait. I'm going to go plead with Her Majesty. My daddy will definitely be okay."

She had come here in rage and left in the same way. Even when she had walked far away, the crowd was still in a state of surprise and disbelief.

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After such a huge fuss was made, this news couldn't be hidden from Zhao Jie.

Princess Consort Yong An invited Wei Luo to the reception pavilion and repeatedly apologized to her with an uneasy expression. "It's my family's fault for letting someone offend Your Highness. I'll have to ask Your Highness to please forgive us... I

already ordered someone to bring a doctor over to check Your Highness's pulse after you suffered through that horrifying incident."

Wei Luo was actually feeling fine. Gao Qing Yang had helped her and Chang Hong had protectively stood in front of her. Li Xiang didn't have a chance to hurt her.

However, she was slightly curious. Did something really happen to Prince Ru Yang? Zhao Jie rarely talked to her about imperial court matters, so Wei Luo didn't know much. If Li Xiang hadn't run over to tell her this, she really wouldn't have found out.

Princess Consort Yong An ordered the servants to punish the guards at the entrance and had the doctor check Wei Luo's pulse. After confirming that Wei Luo was fine, she finally let out a long sigh in relief.

Prince Jing was so ruthless and vicious. If he found out that something happened to Princess Consort Jing while she was at Prince An Yang's residence, then the hundreds of people in her residence would have no hopes of living.

Even though she had these thoughts, Princess Consort Yong An and Gao Wan wouldn't have expected that Zhao Jie would personally come over here.

Zhao Jie had probably just come back from outside and didn't have time to change. He was wearing a deep black robe embroidered with a pattern of golden hornless dragons and a belt that had jade pieces.

He seemed like the stern-faced underworld god that judged the dead. His expression was ice cold as he stood at the reception pavilion's entrance. Without even saying a word, his aura intimidated the womenfolk enough that they didn't even dare to breath. His dark eyes looked around the room and stopped on Wei Luo's body. He walked to her side.

Princess Consort Yong An returned to her senses and hurriedly led everyone to salute him. "This subject greets Your Highness Prince Jing."

Zhao Jie didn't pay attention to them.

The surrounding people thought he would say angry words or lift his hand to strike Wei Luo down. After all, his expression truly looked terrible.

Gao Wan couldn't resist saying, "This matter isn't imperial sister-in-law's fault. It was because that girl from House Li insisted on coming here and offended imperial sister-in-law by saying a bunch of hogwash..."

In the next moment, Gao Wan closed her mouth shut.

Because Zhao Jie had reached Wei Luo side and gently and carefully placed his hand on her cheek. He asked in a distress tone, "Li Xiang slapped you?"

Wei Luo nodded. She raised her teary eyes and said, "But, Chang Hong and Miss Gao helped me, so she wasn't able to hit me." She thought of Li Xiang's words and grabbed his wrist. She blinked and said, "Let's go home to talk about it."

Zhao Jie nodded. There had been an autumn rain when he came over here. The rain was heavy, but it was very cold. Worried that Wei Luo would feel cold, he took off the black cloak lined with fur that he was wearing, draped it over Wei Luo's body, and fastened the cloak's ties. He acted as if he was touching a priceless treasure. When they passed by Princess Consort Yong An, he said, "Many thanks for entertaining the princess consort in your esteemed home. This prince and princess consort will be leaving now."

Princess Consort and Gao Wan froze in shock for a moment. Princess Consort Yong An saluted them and said, "Respectfully sending off Your Highnesses."

Who said that Prince Jing didn't treated Princess Consort Jing



well? This treatment was simply beyond good.

Gao Wan watched Zhao Jie and Wei Luo's back figures as they left with complicated feelings.

Zhao Jie was personally holding up an oilpaper umbrella with a two-ring pattern with one hand and the other hand was protectively placed on Wei Luo's waist. The umbrella was tilted mostly to Wei Luo's side while the rain drenched his shoulders. Wei Luo seemed to noticing that he was getting soaked and unsuccessfully tried pushing the umbrella towards his side. She didn't hear what Wei Luo said to Zhao Jie. She only saw that he moved the umbrella a little bit to his side after Wei Luo spoke to him. But most of the umbrella was still being used to block the rain from Wei Luo as if she was his heart's treasure. He couldn't bear for her to get wet and cold from the rain or let her suffer the slightest mistreatment.

Gao Wan recalled Li Xiang's actions today. She couldn't help clenching her hand around her silk handkerchief as she considered the words that Li Xiang had said.

## Chapter 135.1

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When they returned to Prince Jing's residence, Wei Luo poured out all of the loot she had won today onto a round, rosewood table that was carved with a picture of lions playing with balls. There were many silver and gold ingots (Ming Dynasty currency), jade accessories, and a few pearls. Gao Wan had been very extravagant. More than half of the items here had been hers. Wei Luo separated out the silver and gold ingots and rewarded them to the servants in Zhang Tai Courtyard. She bestowed the small jade fish to Jin Lu and the jade bracelets to Bai Lan. Seeing that the quality of the pearls was pretty good, Wei Luo said to Jin Lu, "Order the servants to grind these pearls into powder. I'm almost out of pearl powder."

Jin Lu nodded and quietly glanced at Zhao Jie. Seeing that his expression wasn't good and that there was clearly something he wanted to say to Wei Luo, she tactfully retreated from the room after saying, "After the pearls have been grinded, this servant will bring them over for Your Highness to look at."

Wei Luo agreed. After all of the servant girls had withdrawn from the room, she looked at Zhao Jie. After thinking for a moment, she hugged him from behind. "Were the things that Li Xiang said today true?"

Zhao Jie held her hand and carefully stroked it. His expression still didn't look very good. "What did she tell you?"

Wei Luo's arms were wrapped around his neck and her cheek was right against his face. In a calm tone, she said, "Prince Ru Yang had rebellious intentions and hid a stash of weapons that was found by Xu Zhou's prefectural magistrate. His Majesty is going to dispose of him."

Then, she paused and blinked her large eyes. "Li Xiang said that you framed Prince Ru Yang and that I incited you into doing this."

Zhao Jie pulled her to his front, cupped her small face in his

hands, and asked, "Do you think this prince deliberately slandered him?"

Wei Luo's limpid eyes were bright and threatening. Although she had been born with a face that looked innocent and harmless, the words that came out of her small mouth were ruthless. "Prince Ru Yang has a massive military force under his control and he's doing evil things with fifth prince. His Majesty had already warned him of the consequences, but he still hasn't shown restraint. People in high positions are likely to be attacked. Even if you don't deal with him, His Majesty will still deal with him. So what if you slandered him? If I were the one that incited you, I would think this crime is too light. You should have used a method that would destroy House Li and fifth prince at the same time."

She had said too much. Wei Luo pursed her lips. Lacking in confidence, she sneakily glanced at Zhao Jie. "I was just casually saying these words. Big brother, you don't have to take these words seriously."

Unexpectedly, Zhao Jie smiled. He rubbed her earlobe and in a delighted tone, he said, "My Ah Luo is really clever."

Wei Luo looked at him. "Then is Prince Ru Yang innocent?"

"No." Zhao Jie held her hand and fiddled around with her fingers with great interest. Wei Luo's fingers were slender and cute. Each white and soft finger was like a bamboo shoot after rain. Her ten fingernails were pink and smooth. A person would feel happier just by looking at them. "Li Zhi Liang really did hide a stash of weapons, but he did it for fifth brother. This matter will be traced back to fifth brother. Imperial father isn't a fool. He naturally knows who was behind Li Zhi Liang's actions. Prince Ru Yang won't be the only that suffers. Fifth brother will also be implicated. Imperial father gave the matter to me to handle instead of fifth brother because he wants this matter handled fairly without any bias."

(T/N: Just in case it was too long ago, Li Zhi Liang is Prince Ru Yang's name.)

Wei Luo lifted her head and looked at him, "How are you going to handle this?"

Zhao Jie slightly curved his lips. His dark eyes silently looked at her for moment before he said, "Since they dared to harm my Ah Luo, they naturally have to pay with their lives."

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Within a few days, the outcome of Prince Ru Yang secretly hiding weapons was determined.

Prince Ru Yang's crime couldn't be pardoned. His military power was completely stripped from him and his official stamp was taken back. Seven days later, he would be decapitated at the southeast gate on a main street. As for his wife and children, in light of Elder Princess Gao Yang's sibling relationship with the emperor, discretion would be exercised. The children would become normal citizens. The current generation of males wouldn't be allowed to participate in the imperial exams or serve as officials. Half of the financial resources in their household would be added to the national treasury. This punishment would also serve as warning to others.

When Elder Princess Gao Yang heard of this news, she collapsed into a chair with an empty expression. She was unable speak.

Standing at her mother's side, Li Xiang burst into tears as she mumbled, "How can this be.... How can this happen to daddy..."

On that day, she had gone to the palace to plead with Empress Chen. Unfortunately, Empress Chen wasn't feeling well and didn't grant her a visit. At the time, she had planned on going to the palace again tomorrow. She couldn't have expected that Prince Ru Yang's punishment would have already been decided.

A judicial officer led people from the Ministry of Justice into

Prince Ru Yang's residence and started to take away almost all of the valuable items. Before the judicial officer left, he saluted Elder Princess Gao Yang and said, "This subordinate is only following orders. Your Highness, please excuse me."

Li Xiang couldn't stand to see the people from the Ministry of Justice. She picked up a colorful teacup lid from an eight immortal-style table and flung it at them, "Scram!"

The judicial officer and the people from the Ministry of Justice were used to seeing turbulent changes. His expression didn't change much as he recorded the items down one by one. Then, he led the people out of the residence.

Li Xiang fell down at Elder Princess Gao Yang's side. She helplessly asked, "Mother, what are we going to do? Is daddy really going to be decapitated..."

Elder Princess Gao Yang was also beside herself with panic. She hadn't expected that the emperor would be so heartless. He didn't show any mercy on behalf of their relationship as siblings. He might as well be preparing to exterminate the entire House Li. She lifted her head and look at the doorway. Li Song had an indifferent expression as he stood there. His eyes showed that he was focused on some unknown thought. She called out, "Song-er..."

Before she could finish speaking, she saw a servant girl wearing a green jacket and skirt rushing inside. She said, "Madam, bad news! Young Madam committed suicide by hanging herself!"

Rats will leave a sinking ship.

Elder Princess Gao Yang felt as if the sight in front of her had turned black. She fainted.

## Chapter 135.2

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By the time that someone pulled her down, Wei Zheng had already stopped breathing. Wei Zheng didn't kill herself because of Prince Ru Yang's matter. It was because her heart had turned to ashes. She didn't have the will to continue living. This matter was just the last straw that broke the camel's back. From the time that she married Li Song, she didn't have a single day that wasn't uneasy. Li Song never touched her, but he would force her to serve multiple men at a time. After the gang of scoundrels from their wedding night, there were the guards in the residence. The pack of scoundrels never appeared again. Perhaps, Li Song had dealt with them. Instead, it was the guards. They were all rough and large men. They didn't have any tender feelings towards the fairer sex and were always heavy-handed and vicious. There didn't seem to be a single spot on Wei Zheng's body that wasn't bruised. In addition, they treated her as if she wasn't officially wed to Li Song. Her mother-in-law and sister-in-law looked down on her. Li Xiang constantly ridiculed her.

She hadn't been treated as a human during this time in Prince Ru Yang's residence. She finally realized how naïve she had been in believing that she could gain control of the situation and the internal household. She now realized that this belief was utterly laughable.

Li Song stood outside the doorway to the main room and looked at the woman lying motionless on the ground. He furrowed his eyebrows and said, "What happened?"

Wei Zheng's dowry servant girl, Yin Lou, endlessly and brokenheartedly cried, "Miss... Miss has already stopped breathing..."

Wei Zheng still had to cause trouble at this critical moment. So what if she died? Was she hoping that someone would feel pity for her? Li Xiang didn't feel anything. Instead, she felt even more annoyed. "As her servant girl, why didn't you watch over her more

carefully? Our family already has an unsettled problem. My daddy's survival is uncertain. Is she hoping that we'll bury her?" Then, she spat and left.

Li Song was even colder. After only glancing at her, he said, "Have someone make a coffin and bury her."

Right now, House Li was powerless. Whether or not his family could be saved was already a problem. Even if Wei Zheng died, it wasn't a big deal. Other people would only think that Wei Zheng died because she couldn't handle the shock of House Li's decline.

For the time being, no one mentioned Wei Zheng. On the next day, Elder Princess Gao Yang and Li Xiang pleaded to see Empress Chen. They waited outside Qing Xi Palace for an hour before Empress Chen ordered people to bring them inside.

Today was different from the past. Even though Elder Princess Gao Yang was angry, it wouldn't be good for her to do as she pleased. She properly saluted Empress Chen, then she pulled Li Xiang down to kneel with her. She begged, "Elder sister-in-law, please ask imperial brother to show mercy. Let off his younger brother-in-law this one time!"

Elder sister-in-law. Younger brother-in-law. At this time, she was sucking up by using familial relations. Empress Chen was sitting on an ironwood chair that was carved with a pattern of grapes. She didn't tell them to rise and only said, "Elder Princess, why are you doing this? Other people will laugh if they see this."

Elder Princess Gao Yang stayed kneeling and shed tears as she said, "Although Prince Ru Yang had delusionally committed a huge mistake, he's still His Majesty's younger brother-in-law. Moreover, he has two children. If he's gone, how can I continue living if I become a widow?"

Seeing that Empress Chen didn't show any response, her heart sunk. She was afraid that Empress Chen wasn't swayed by her words and actions. She hurriedly said, "I beg Your Majesty to ask

His Majesty to show leniency. As long as Prince Ru Yang isn't killed, I'll be willing to be a witness. When Liuli had been poisoned back then..."

"Elder Princess." Empress Chen's gaze became frigid and she interrupted her words. "The inner palace can't be involved in politics. You should understand these words clearly. There's no use in begging me. Chang Sheng is the one that's handling this matter. Other people can't change his decisions."



# Chapter 136.1

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Elder Princess Gao Yang knew that this was a thorn in Empress Chen's heart. As long as she grasped this thorn, she could stab her in the part that hurt her the most. This was why she didn't give up after hearing Empress Chen's words. Instead, she continued, "Back then, Liuli had just turned one year old when she was poisoned by someone. Elder sister-in-law, you must know that although Consort Shu was related to this matter, she was only being exploited by someone else. The chief culprit was Noble Consort Ning."

Empress Chen closed her eyes. Her nail guards gripped the chair's armrests. She didn't reply.

Elder Princess Gao Yang thought her words were effective and her eyes couldn't help brightening. She continued to fearlessly say, "At the time Noble Consort Ning was very favored by imperial brother, so he pretended to not notice anything. If I act as a witness for elder sister-in-law now, imperial brother will definitely..."

Empress Chen couldn't restrain her emotions and interrupted her, "Enough." Soon after, she opened her beautiful, long and narrow phoenix eyes, "Do you think that this empress will help if you say these words? Back when Liuli had been poisoned, you concealed the truth. If you want to use this matter to threaten this empress, this empress will only feel more annoyed towards you."

In the end, she was a woman that had led armies and fought battles. She had a bone-deep majesty of being above others. A single flat look from her made Elder Princess Gao Yang speechless.

"Do you think you're the only person that can act as witness for what happened back then? Zhao Xuan, you think too highly of yourself."

Back when Zhao Liuli had been poisoned and Consort Shu had

been executed, Empress Chen did think that the circumstances were strange. But, she wasn't able to find evidence at the time. Moreover, when she mentioned the matter to Emperor Chong Zhen, he had only said she was too suspicious and reprimanded her for begin biased against Noble Consort Ning. At that time, Emperor Chong Zhen had heavily favored Noble Consort Ning.

From that time onwards, Empress Chen's feelings toward Emperor Chong Zhen started to fade. She slowly thought things through. Even if she got rid of Noble Consort Ning, there were still Noble Consort Wan and Noble Consort Xu. It would better for her to leave Noble Consort Ning alone and hold onto information could be used against her.

In addition, the poison hadn't been completely removed from Zhao Liuli's body and her body was extremely weak. Empress Chen whole-heartedly focused her attention on Zhao Liuli's health. She had searched for all of the famous doctors in the world. She only occasionally thought of what had happened back then after Zhao Liuli's health had improved during the recent years.

Now that Elder Princess Gao Yang had reminded her of this, Empress Chen only felt more disgusted towards Zhao Xuan instead of feeling happy.

If she hadn't drawn Emperor Chong Zhen and Noble Consort Ning together back then, the following events wouldn't have happened.

In addition, her husband was loyal to Zhao Zhang and was always opposing Zhao Jie. Where exactly did she get the self-confidence to believe that she would be willing to help her?

Zhao Xuan's face became deathly white. She realized that Empress Chen was determined to not help House Li. In her heart, Zhao Xuan was still a lofty and unyielding person. She gritted her teeth and bid farewell to Empress Chen, "Since it's like that, then I won't bother imperial sister-in-law further." She stood up and

walked out of Zhao Yang Hall.

Li Xiang followed behind her. This was the first she felt desperate and uneasy. With red eyes, she asked, "Mother, what will we do next? Will daddy really be beheaded?"

Although Elder Princess Gao Yang wasn't overjoyed with her rough and warlike husband, in the end, they had been together for many years and she did have feelings towards him. She couldn't stand by and do nothing as he was sentenced to death.

In addition, House Li would perish if Li Zhi Liang died. Although she was an elder princess, she was no longer the previous emperor's favored young daughter. If Zhao Jie became the emperor, her days would become even worse. Thus, she was also pleading for a guarantee for herself as she asked for leniency for Li Zhi Liang.

Unexpectedly, she saw Zhao Jie walk out of Xuan Shi Hall just as she got there. He was wearing a dark reddish purple robe embroidered with serpents. He glanced at Zhao Xiang and Li Xiang as he walked out. He ordered the eunuch that was guarding the hall, "The emperor has ordered that unless someone has an urgent imperial court matter, no one is allowed to enter the hall and bother him."

The eunuch swung his horsetail whisk and respectfully said, "Understood."

Zhao Jie's line of sight swept past Elder Princess Gao Yang and Li Xiang's faces for a moment. Then, he left.

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Within a few days, news about Prince Ru Yang's family had spread to every corner of the capital.

In order to protect himself, Fifth prince Zhao Zhang had to abandon his chess piece, Prince Ru Yang, and cut off all contact with House Li. He didn't take the risk of pleading with the

emperor.

House Li was completely finished.

On the day before Prince Ru Yang would be beheaded, when Wei Luo was coming back from outside in a carriage, a person rushed out from a corner right after the carriage had stopped at Prince Jing's residence's entrance. The person stopped in front of the carriage without any explanation. With a resolute expression, the person's gaze was focused on the carriage's dark curtain that was embroidered with golden thread.

The carriage driver lifted up the whip. He was originally going to berate her. But once he had a clearer look of her face, he suddenly stopped.

Wei Luo stepped on the carriage's pedal and came down from the carriage. She didn't even look at the other person before she started walking towards the residence.

The other person quickly went around Wei Luo and stopped in front of her, "Wei Luo, stop!"

Wei Luo stopped walking and looked at the other person. It was Li Xiang's tenacious and unyielding face. Although Wei Luo didn't know why Li Xiang was here, Wei Luo wasn't interested in finding out why. She pretended that she didn't see her and walked around her. She didn't expect that Li Xiang would kneel without any warning.

Li Xiang raised her head and looked at Wei Luo. "Wei Luo, I know that older cousin Prince Jing listens to your words the most. Treat it as if I was wrong about everything in the past. I shouldn't have opposed you. My daddy is going to be beheaded tomorrow. Older brother Prince Jing is handling his case. If you say a few words in front of him, he'll definitely listen..."

So, she wanted her to plead with Zhao Jie. Wei Luo only found this matter laughable. Where did Li Xiang get the face to ask her

for a favor? A few days ago, she had solemnly said that she and Zhao Jie had framed Prince Ru Yang. Without allowing her any time for an explanation, she had tried to slap her. Now, that she was at a dead end, she came here with pitiful appearance to beg her. Wei Luo couldn't help thinking. Did Li Xiang think she was a weak person that could be easily bullied?

Wei Luo wasn't in a hurry to enter the residence. In the midst of this chaotic moment, she calmly glanced at Li Xiang. Wei Luo curved her limpid almond-shaped eyes and dealt with her by saying, "Then tell me, why should I help Prince Ru Yang?"

Li Xiang lowered her eyes for a moment. When she looked up again, there was a complicated glimmer in her eyes that was difficult to discern. Before Wei Luo could figure out what that glimmer meant, Li Xiang started speaking, "After we came back from the hunting competition in Chang Xun Mountain, my older brother was holding a hairpin in his hand. Later, I found out that the hairpin was yours. My older brother once called out your name when he was sleeping. He didn't want to marry Wei Zheng. The person that he likes is you. My older brother wasn't the one that injured Wei Chang Hong back then. It was me, who shot him. He only took responsibility for my crime. My older brother can never participate in the imperial exams in the future. He'll be an ordinary citizen for the rest of his life... Even if you can't save my daddy, my older brother is innocent. I hope that older cousin Prince Jing can be more lenient with his sentencing..."

Wei Luo slightly froze. She looked at Li Xiang again. A long time later, she finally said, "You were the one that injured Chang Hong?"

Li Xiang lowered her head and frankly admitted, "It was me."

She thought that Wei Luo's heart would soften if she said these words, so she mumbled, "Wei Zheng committed suicide by hanging herself. Older brother has always liked you. I'm the one that you have conflict with. I'm begging you. Please let off my older

brother...”

## Chapter 136.2

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Before she could finish her words, Wei Luo leaned over, grasped her chin, and harshly raised Li Xiang's face. She mercilessly asked, "What right do you have to beg me? Why are you telling me this? Why would I care who Li Song is thinking about in his heart?"

Wei Luo's gaze hovered over Li Xiang's lower lip. It seems that she hadn't been living well during the past few days. Her lips were dried and cracked. She was no longer a strikingly lovely girl. Wei Luo lightly laughed and her lips curved into a beautiful smile. Her eyes were bright and glittering.

Her tone slightly softened into a sweet and moving voice, "Li Xiang, aren't you too presumptuous? Even if Li Song wasn't the one that injured Chang Hong, this matter is still related to House Li. Besides, the emperor was the one that personally supervised and examined this case. Do you really think the verdict can easily be changed?"

After Wei Luo thought something over, she straightened her body and lightly glanced at Li Xiang. "I wouldn't be willing to help even if it was possible to change."

In a few steps, she walked into Prince Jing's residence. As she passed the guards at the entrance, she instructed, "If Miss Li wants to kneel here, then let her keep kneeling here. You don't need to pass on any messages or news."

The servant sympathetically glanced at Li Xiang, then he turned his head and respectfully said, "Understood, Your Highness."

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Wei Luo was a hard-hearted person. She would never reconsider a decision after it was made or regret not changing her mind once she disliked someone.

She didn't tell Zhao Jie about this brief episode.

On the next day, a prison cart brought Prince Ru Yang to the south main street. He was beheaded at the southern east gate. Prince Ru Yang's family that had once been famous started its downward spiral towards decline.

Because Zhao Zhang was implicated by Prince Ru Yang's actions, Emperor Chong Zhen wasn't happy with him. After Emperor Chong Zhen called him to his study and questioned him, he put Zhao Zhang under house arrest for three months. He wouldn't be allowed to take a step out of his residence until the three months passed. Emperor Chong Zhen even took back the government affairs that he had recently given to him and handed the work over to Zhao Jie to deal with.

Gossip came from the imperial courts that Emperor Chong Zhen was going to declare who would be the heir apparent.

Zhao Jie would be overseeing the beheading. Around noontime, seeing that Zhao Jie hadn't returned, Wei Luo called Yang Hao to her side and asked, "Why hasn't His Highness returned yet?"

Yang Hao had been left behind by Zhao Jie to protect Wei Luo. With his head lowered, he said, "To respond to Your Highness, His Highness has to go to the palace to report to His Majesty after the beheading."

After Wei Luo thought it over, it seemed reasonable, so she didn't ask any more questions.

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Towards the evening, it suddenly started to rain. Raindrop after raindrop fell. The ground quickly became wet as the rain became heavier. Wei Luo was standing next to a window. She rested her chin in her hand as she admired the view of the rain falling on the osmanthus flowers in the courtyard.

A short while later, a servant girl came inside. She saluted Wei Luo and said, "Your Highness, there someone outside that wants to



see you and hopes that you'll come outside."

Wei Luo turned her head, "Who wants to see me?"

The servant girl shook her head, "This servant doesn't know. The person had an unfamiliar face."

Wei Luo's expression didn't change. "Then, ask the person's identity and reason for wanting to see me. If the person doesn't answer, I won't see that person."

The servant girl withdrew from the room.

Wei Luo walked to a cabinet in the corner and took out a frame for embroidering from a basket. The frame held the tops of the shoes that Wei Luo was embroidering for Zhao Jie. However, her embroidery skills weren't very good. After one month, she still hadn't finished. It would probably take her two more months to finish sewing this into shoes. Wei Luo had Jin Lu light the candles, then Wei Luo embroidered for almost an hour underneath the candlelight.

Just as she raised her head to rest her eyes for a bit, the previous servant girl came inside again. Her tone was slightly distressed as she said, "Your Highness, that person has been staying in the rain for such a long time. No matter what I say, the person won't leave..."

Wei Luo put down the embroidery frame. She had already guessed who that person was. She had Jin Lu bring an umbrella over, then she stood up and said, "Let's go out and look."

Outside Prince Jing's residence's entrance, Li Song was sitting on a tall black horse. He was wearing a woven rush coat. The rain had inevitably soaked his handsome face. His dark eyes were like unfathomably deep pools. Seeing Wei Luo coming out, Li Song's gaze slightly moved. But, he didn't move forward and only quietly stayed in place.

Wei Zheng had already been buried. Duke Ying and Wei Kun had

gone to her funeral. Wei Kun felt very sad and thought that Wei Zheng had been too foolish. The person that had been the most upset was Du-shi. Du-shi embraces her coffin and cried for a long time. When she returned to Count Zhong Yi's residence, her mind was unclear and she seemed slightly deranged.

Wei Luo already knew all about this.

Wei Luo stopped at the entrance's eaves. She raised her eyes and looked at Li Song, who was in front of her. There wasn't the slightest surprise in her eyes. "Why are you here in front of my home? It's too late for you to learn to beg for pity."

This young girl's mouth was always so poisonous. From the very beginning, she made him hate her to the point that his teeth felt itchy from wanting to bite her. But still, he couldn't stop longing for her.

Li Song looked at her, "Li Xiang came to look for you yesterday?"

Wei Luo curved the corners of her lips and didn't express an opinion.

Li Song asked, "What did she say to you?"

"She said many things. What do you want to know?" Wei Luo handed the oilpaper umbrella that was painted with orchids to Jin Lu. A raindrop coincidentally rolled down from the umbrella at this moment to drip down to the corner of her eye. The raindrop slipped down her cheek. Her eyes were clearer than the raindrop.

"She thought that I would stop disliking you if she told me that Chang Hong's injury wasn't caused by you. But, Li Song, I won't feel bad that you decided to take responsibility for Li Xiang's actions. You reap what you sow."

Li Song moved the horse slightly closer to her. He didn't say a word as he stared at her small face. He suddenly smiled and said, "Who wants your sympathy?"

Before Wei Luo returned to her senses, he untied something from

his waist and threw it at Wei Luo. Wei Luo instinctively retreated a step back and the item fell onto the ground in front of her. When she moved closer, she saw that it was a knotted red waist accessory. There was a piece of jade tied to the accessory. The jade had been separated into two pieces after falling onto the ground. Wei Luo lowered her eyes to look. It was a circular jade piece that resembled a lotus root. She didn't understand his action.

Li Song seemed as if he didn't care that the jade had been broken. He turned his horse around and headed towards one of the capital's gates.

He had already spoken with Elder Princess Gao Yang. He was going to leave the capital and travel around. Perhaps, he might never return.

That jade piece was something that was given to House Li's heir's wife. When Wei Zheng married into Prince Ru Yang's household, he had never thought about giving this to her. It felt good to throw this at Wei Luo. At any rate, he wouldn't be giving this to anyone else.

Before he had ridden far, he saw a parked carriage. The carriage's curtain lifted and he saw a person sitting inside.

Zhao Jie was leaning against the carriage's wall. He didn't know how much of the previous scene Zhao Jie had seen.

Li Song tightened the reins and stopped the horse. He directly faced Zhao Jie.

Zhao Jie's phoenix eyes were unfathomably deep. He took the umbrella that Zhu Geng handed to him, came down from the carriage, and said in an understated tone, "Cripple his martial arts ability."

# Chapter 137.1

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The rain had come suddenly and fallen rapidly. A short period of time after Zhao Jie had returned, the rain stopped. However, Wei Luo wasn't feeling well. Shortly after they finished dinner, Wei Luo's cheeks became flushed and her mind became foggy. She said some muddled words while she was nestled against Zhao Jie's chest.

After a doctor was called over, the doctor said she was sick because she was fatigued from the past few days and today's chilly temperature had invaded her body. The doctor wrote out a prescription and Zhao Jie ordered a pageboy to go with the doctor to bring the back the medicine. Zhao Jie took the towel that Jin Lu brought over and held it on Wei Luo's forehead. He asked Jin Lu, "What did Her Highness do today?"

Jin Lu narrated Wei Luo's day fully, "After it started to rain, Her Highness had been standing at the window for a long time. This servant said a few words to try to persuade her. Later on, Her Highness finally left the window and sat down to embroider. And then... House Li's young master came by and requested to see Her Highness. Her Highness went outside to see him."

Zhao Jie's expression didn't change. He lowered his eyes and looked at the young girl that was completely curled up in his arms. He suddenly asked, "What was she embroidering?"

Jin Lu suddenly realized. She hastily went to a red sandalwood cabinet that was carved with a scroll pattern and took out an embroidery frame. She brought the item to Zhao Jie and said, "To respond to Your Highness, it's this one."

Zhao Jie took the item and saw a decorate design of honeysuckle embroidered in golden and silver thread. From the pattern, it seemed like it would be used to make a pair of shoes. He suddenly thought about how he asked Wei Luo to make a pair of shoes for

him. He originally thought that the little fellow had already forgotten about this. So much time had passed since he asked. Unexpectedly, she hadn't forgotten. Zhao Jie lowered his gaze and chuckled. He gave the item back to Jin Lu and said, "Put this back."

Jin Lu felt slightly puzzled, but she did as he said.

A short while later, a servant brought over the prepared medicine. Zhao Jie scooped up a spoonful, blew on it to cool it down, and brought it to Wei Luo's lips, "Ah Luo, it's time to drink your medicine."

Wei Luo actually wasn't seriously sick. She had been napping in Zhao Jie's arms until Zhao Jie woke her up. Her small eyebrows were twisted as she forced herself to drink the bowl of bitter medicine. She fluttered her fan-like eyelashes and said, "I want to eat sweet osmanthus flower and lotus root."

This wasn't a difficult request. Zhao Jie put down the celadon bowl with a lotus flower pattern onto a teapoy that was by the bed and said to Jin Lu and Bai Lan, "Order the cook to immediately make sweet osmanthus flower and lotus root and bring it over here."

Wei Luo was sick right now and should be eating lighter foods, so he added, "Also prepare a bowl of snow ear fungus and pumpkin congee and a few side dishes."

Jin Lu and Bai Lan immediately withdrew from the room.

Wei Luo leaned against Zhao Jie's chest and snuggled closer. She stretched her hand out and wrapped it around his waist. She was somewhat unhappy. "Big brother, you've been leaving early and coming home late every day because of Prince Ru Yang's matter. You haven't kept me company for a while."

Zhao Jie smiled, pinched her little nose, and said, "How has the prince not kept you company? I've only been slightly busier during

these past two days and you're already holding a grievance."

Wei Luo didn't reply immediately. Perhaps, her thoughts were disorderly because she was sick. She said things as soon as they popped into her mind, "I don't want Li Song's jade piece."

Zhao Jie tightly held her wrist and his chin was resting on the top of her head. "I'll have someone bring it back to the elder princess tomorrow."

She nodded and didn't say another word.

Shortly after, the sweet osmanthus flower and lotus root, snow ear fungus and pumpkin congee, and other dishes were brought over. Wei Luo was feeling weak, so Zhao Jie hand-fed her the meal.

Wei Luo felt tired after dinner. She curled up around a quilt and fell asleep. Zhao Jie went to his study.

When he had gone to the palace today, Emperor Chong Zhen had handed over Zhao Zhang's work to him. He wanted him to leave for Tong Zhou in a few days to supervise the repairing of the river channel. Normally, this wouldn't be something that Zhao Jie should have to do at this time. Zhao Jie had only been married for half a month. They only had time to be affectionate with each other for a short period of time. It wasn't very considerate of Emperor Chong Zhen to throw this work at Zhao Jie and separate him for his newly wedded wife. However, repairing the river channel couldn't be delayed. Emperor Chong Zhen had waved his hand and told him to leave for Tong Zhou in a few days.

Zhao Jie leaned back in a chair that was decoratively carved with roses. His heart felt sour. Tong Zhou wasn't far from the capital. It would only take a carriage seven to eight days to get there. By waterway, it would only take three to four days. He could bring Wei Luo with him. Moreover, Tian Chan Mountain was also in Tong Zhou. If Wei Luo was bored, he could bring her to his villa to soak in the hot springs.

He just didn't know if Wei Luo would be agreeable to this.

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The following day, Wei Luo had mostly recovered and she wanted to eat pickled white radish for breakfast. After she brushed her teeth and rinsed her mouth, she felt refreshed as she sat down at the table.

Zhao Jie asked her, "I have to take a trip to Tong Zhou in a few days. Ah Luo, would you want to go there with me?"

As Wei Luo bit into the pickled white radish, it tasted crisp and sweet. Without even thinking, she replied, "Sure."

Zhao Jie smiled. He wanted to hold her in his arms. "You're not going to ask me why I'm going there?"

Wei Luo ate another bite of picked radish and drank a bowl of congee. She open-mindedly said, "Isn't it something that His Majesty has assigned you to do? What's there to ask about?"

She suddenly thought of something, turned her head, and anxiously asked, "How long will we be going? Will we be able to come back before New Year?"

Liang Yu Rong would be getting married in February. She wanted to see Liang Yu Rong one more time before she got married and have a private discussion. In addition, she would have to visit Duke Ying's residence on New Year's. Chang Hong's marriage should be settled soon. She couldn't let this matter slip.

Fortunately, Zhao Jie nodded and said, "Definitely."

Wei Luo let go of her worries.

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Very quickly, the day to leave arrived. Knowing that Tian Chan Mountain was also in Tong Zhou, Wei Luo became more interested. While Zhao Jie was in Tong Zhou working, she could stay in Tian Chan Mountain and enjoy the hot springs by herself. It

would be wonderful. Because there was a long distance to travel, Wei Luo didn't bring many servants. She only brought Jin Lu, Bai Lan, Yun Gua, Yu Suo, and two older female servants.

Because winter had started, the temperate became colder and colder on the way there. The carriage wasn't comparable to a prince's residence. There wasn't a floor heating system. Wei Luo still felt cold even though she was holding a hand stove and was wearing a cloak lined with fox fur. Wei Luo wasn't willing to go outside, so Zhao Jie stayed inside the carriage to accompany her the entire time. It would definitely be warmer with two people sitting inside the carriage instead of one person.

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Today, Zhao Jie had sent Jin Lu and Bai Lan out of the carriage. He hugged Wei Luo while she sat in his lap, "Are you still cold?"

Wei Luo nodded. For some unknown reason, she had been feeling very cold the past few days. She hadn't felt this cold in previous winters.

Zhao Jie said into her ear, "How about we do something to warm up your body?"

Wei Luo didn't understanding his meaning at first and even innocently asked, "Do what?" She didn't understand until Zhao Jie took off her cloak.

She had spent the past few days in the carriage and Jin Lu and Bai Lan had always been at her side to serve her, so it wasn't convenient for Zhao Jie to do that thing. He had probably been feeling very stifled. Not caring that they were in a carriage, he stripped the rest of her clothing. Wei Luo wasn't against doing this type of thing, but she was worried that the driver outside would hear them. With a blushing face, she covered her chest and said, "We'll arrive in Tong Zhou soon..."

Zhao Jie held her waist, nipped at her ear, and said, "I can't



wait.”

This time, it was forceful and urgent.

Zhao Jie's chest was hotter than Wei Luo's. Wei Luo felt as if a burning furnace was embracing her and that she would soon melt. Wei Luo did her best to not make a sound. They hadn't done this for too long. Zhao Jie came very quickly the first time. As she gasped for breath, Zhao Jie quickly regained his energy before she had time to rest. He placed her on a large pillow with a ripple pattern and started moving again.

This time, it lasted a long time.

Wei Luo opened her mouth and bit down on Zhao Jie's shoulder. She pitifully moaned, “Gentler.”

However, Zhao Jie was shameless. Instead of listening to her words, he became more forceful.

An hour later, Wei Luo's entire body felt weak and sweaty. She collapsed onto a large pillow. There was crimson cloak that was embroidered with peony flowers covering her. This cloak made her exposed feet look even more white and lustrous in comparison.

At this time, Zhao Jie was feeling satisfied from gorging. He held her small feet and separated her legs.

Wei Luo immediately became alert, moved closer to a corner, and said, “Don't.” Her hoarse and soft voice really made a person feel fondly towards her.

Zhao Jie smiled and very gently said, “I'm just drying you off. Otherwise, how will you put on your clothes?”

Wei Luo paused for a moment. She stopped resisting and closed her eyes.

She thought that the driver outside had definitely heard them. She hadn't been able to resist calling out. As soon as she thought of this, she didn't have the face to go outside. But, no matter how

reluctant she was, the carriage still arrived in Tong Zhou and eventually to the foot of Tian Chan Mountain.

## Chapter 137.2

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When they ascended the mountain, the villa's steward led the servants to wait at the villa's entrance to welcome them.

Zhao Jie left the carriage to speak with the steward and Wei Luo called Jin Lu and Bai Lan inside to help her put on her clothes.

Jin Lu and Bai Lan knew what had happened. They had the discernment to not ask any questions and obediently did their work.

After they entered the villa, Wei Luo stayed in the same room as before. The only difference was that she would now be staying here with Zhao Jie.

Because Zhao Jie had work, he only stayed for the night. Early next morning, he hurriedly left the mountain to go into the city to supervise the river transportation work.

Wei Luo slept until dawn. She comfortably soaked in the hot spring for an hour before she looked for things to do. The mountain was covered in snow for most of the year. When they came yesterday, she saw that the mountain was covered in a layer of brilliantly white snow. No wonder it was so cold. She was dressed in a crimson cloak lined with fox fur and holding a hand stove as she walked around the villa. Last time, she had lived here for three months with Liang Yu Rong, so she knew the best places in the villa. But, it was bound to be slightly boring with only one person. She only walked around for a bit before returning to her room.

Just as she walked to a verandah, she saw a little gray squirrel under a pine tree in the courtyard. It was holding a pine nut between its two paws and looking at her.

Wei Luo became interested. Her eyes brightened and she asked, "Jin Lu, do we have any pine nuts left?"

Jin Lu said, "This servant will go inside to look."

Unfortunately, by the time that Jin Lu came back, the squirrel had already climbed up the tree, jumped out of the courtyard, and fled.

Wei Luo was slightly regretful. When Zhao Jie came back that night, she casually mentioned this to him.

After listening, Zhao Jie smiled and said, "If you want, I'll catch one for you tomorrow."

Wei Luo quickly refused. It was nice to see a squirrel occasionally. If she had to keep one as pet, she wasn't sure if she could keep it alive. She suddenly thought of the turquoise squirrel waist accessory that Zhao Jie had given her. Wei Luo took it out of a trunk, went back to Zhao Jie's side, and asked, "I forgot to ask at the time. Why did you give me this?"

This time, Zhao Jie didn't avoid answering this question. His hands pinched her cheeks and chuckled, "Back then, you looked like a rustling squirrel when you ate pine nuts in my carriage."

So, that was the reason! Wei Luo immediately felt that this squirrel wasn't that cute anymore. She slowly put the waist accessory back and said, "Oh."

The young girl's mood changed too quickly. Zhao Jie loudly laughed, "What did you do today other than looking at squirrels?"

Wei Luo honestly described her day, then she finally pushed towards the bed, "Big brother, you should go to sleep soon."

In fact, it took a while to get from Tian Chang Mountain to Tong Zhou's city. It took an hour by carriage and Zhao Jie had to leave before the sun came up. Even so, he wasn't willing to live in the city. He insisted on going back and forth each day. Tong Zhou's prefectural magistrate had invited him several times to stay at his residence, but he refused each time. The reason? He wanted to come back and accompany his little wife.

After a few days like this, Zhao Jie finally had half a day off. He simply stayed by Wei Luo's side and refused to leave. He hugged her while sitting on the bed with his eyes closed.

Wei Luo saw that he had thin black circles under his eyes. She guessed that he probably hadn't been sleeping well during the past few days, so she scolded him, "Go to sleep. You haven't had a good rest in a while. I'll sit here and read a book. After I finish eating, I'll wake you up."

Zhao Jie didn't move. He lazily said, "I'll just stay here and keep you company."

Wei Luo didn't know what to do with him and could only go along with what he wanted.

Wei Luo was reading a book that contained many interesting folk stories. Feeling bored during the past few days, she had been entertaining herself by reading this book. Wei Luo had read up to a story called "The Emerald Locket". This first half of the story was about a girl from a noble family, who fell in love with a scholar. She ignored her servant girl when she tried to dissuade her from privately meeting with him. They made a pledge to marry without their parents' approval. Later on, she gave her body's innocence to the scholar.

The rest of the story should have been about the couple's mutually harmonious and affectionate feelings and their happy ending. However, after that scholar finished his schooling and scored third place in Han Lin Academy's examination, his heart became fickle and he failed to be loyal to his lover. He married the prime minister's daughter. The girl from the noble family couldn't accept his change in heart.

Before she died, she asked him why he had changed and that scholar actually said, "You easily gave me your body. After I thought about it later, I felt that you weren't the noble and respectable girl that I thought you were. If a woman had self-

respect and cherished her good name, how could she easily give her body to someone before marriage?”

The girl couldn't handle the scholar's derision. She left behind an emerald locket and threw herself into a lake to commit suicide. This locket had been the love token he had given to her when they had pledged to get married.

After reading this, Wei Luo was so furious that she almost couldn't resist ripping the book. She blurted out, “If I was the girl in the book, I would drag the scholar with me as I jumped into the lake.”

Zhao Jie wasn't asleep and had finished reading this story with her. He casually said, “I think the scholar's words were right.”

Startled, Wei Luo turned her head and started at Zhao Jie as she asked, “What did you say?”

Zhao Jie realized that Wei Luo was angry, so he leaned against the window and smiled as he looked at her.

However, Zhao Jie's earlier words were like a thorn that pierced Wei Luo's heart. She had to get a clear answer. “Do you really think that the scholar wasn't wrong?”

Zhao Jie stayed silent. Seeing that Wei Luo's little face was getting uglier, he finally said, “Why are you being so persistent about this question?”

However, Wei Luo felt that he was tacitly agreeing from his attitude. Wei Luo pushed him away and left his embrace. With a tense expression, she questioned him, “Does big brother also think of me like that? Before we were married, we also privately saw each other and had a love affair. Do you think of me in the same way as the girl in the book? A person who doesn't have self-respect?”

It was only now that Zhao Jie understood why she was angry. His heart skipped a beat. He reached his hand out to bring her back

into his embrace. “What are you saying...”

But, Wei Luo was quicker than him. She jumped down from the couch like a rabbit, glowered at him, and said, “I don’t want to talk to you.” Then, she ran out of the room without even properly putting on her shoes.

## Chapter 138.1

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The study wasn't far away from the bedroom. In addition, Wei Luo ran quickly. She disappeared from his sight in the blink of an eye. By the time that Zhao Jie caught up to her, Wei Luo slammed the doors shut in Zhao Jie's face without any attempt to spare his feelings. After Zhao Jie touched his nose, he pushed against the doors. But, Wei Luo had already securely latched the doors from inside.

He helplessly sighed, "Ah Luo, open the doors. Let's calmly talk this out."

No sound came from behind the doors. She was probably still angry.

It wouldn't be easy to eliminate her anger. Zhao Jie bitterly smiled.

In fact, Wei Luo felt more than just anger. Wei Luo felt disappointed and furious. So, it turned out that Zhao Jie wasn't different from other men. He also had those thoughts. What was he thinking when he had taken advantage of her back then? Was it the same as the scholar? Was he thinking that she was easy to deceive as he enjoyed her body when they did those indecent things?

Wei Luo's face felt burning hot. She turned around and glared at the doors. She ignored the words meant to deceive her that came from outside. At this moment, she really despised Zhao Jie.

Wei Luo was worried that Zhao Jie would come into the room through the window. After all, he had that before. So, she preemptively went to the window and tightly closed it. She restlessly walked around the room before finally sitting down on the couch.

Hugging a large pillow, she said towards the doorway, "Stop



talking. I don't want to listen. Go away, we're sleeping separately tonight. Don't try to talk to me."

The voice from outside paused. Zhao Jie place a hand against the doorframe and slowly said, "Ah Luo, I didn't know that you would think that way. I've never thought of you that way." He was too busy liking her. How could he think badly of her?

But, she was angry at him, so he could only properly explain. "Before we were married, we were both willing. When the conditions are right, things will naturally go that way. You would definitely be mine in the end, so I couldn't resist exercising some of my rights in advance. I won't be like that scholar. I won't be fickle. Open the doors. There are some things that I want to directly say to you."

Wei Luo's eyes were red as she fell onto the couch. She slipped off her shoes with her feet and curled up into ball, "I don't want to talk to you. That's not what you said earlier."

He had only change his answer to deceive and coax her.

The more that Wei Luo thought about this, the more that she felt Zhao Jie was hateful. Before they married, his words had been sweeter than songs. After they married, his real thoughts were unmasked and the whole truth was revealed. Men were all scoundrels. If she didn't handle this matter properly, he would think that he could act if he was someone from the heavens.

No matter what Zhao Jie said, Wei Luo continued to ignore him. Shortly after, she gradually felt sleepy. She closed her eyes and fell asleep on the couch.

About an hour later, there weren't any sounds of movement inside the room.

Jin Lu and Bai Lan looked at Prince Jing, who was still standing at the doors. They didn't know what to do. The prince and princess consort were having an argument. When the argument

had started, they were standing outside the room and didn't know what had happened. They only saw the princess consort rushing out from the bedroom and locking herself in the study. What happened? Hadn't they been very affectionate and loving with each other during the previous days? They had stuck together like glue. Why did they suddenly start arguing?

Since they were servants, it wouldn't be appropriate for Jin Lu and Bai Lan to persuade the couple to reconcile. They could only quietly stand at the side and observe the mournful prince.

They had a clear understanding of Wei Luo's temperament. She wouldn't be willing to turn a blind eye. When Wei Luo was a child, she had gotten angry with Wei Kun. She had burned the gifts that he had given her until nothing was left and wouldn't pay attention to him for many days. Later on, Wei Kun had tolerantly coaxed her for several days before she forgave him.

Now that their miss had started an argument with their lord, and it didn't seem like she was only slightly angry, who knows how many days their lord would have to coax her...

"Her Highness is probably sleeping. Your Highness, how about coming back here tomorrow morning? Perhaps, Her Highness won't be angry then." Jin Lu tried to persuade.

Zhao Jie wasn't moved by these words. He said to Zhu Geng, "Open the doors."

Zhu Geng obediently approached. They only saw him place his hand against the doors and gently push. The doors opened. It almost seemed as if he was using witchcraft.

Jin Lu and Bai Lan were stunned.

Zhao Jie pushed open the doors, entered the room, and had everyone else stay outside. He walked into the inner room and saw Wei Luo lying on the couch behind the divider that was made of four red sandalwood panels with paintings of beautiful women.

She was curled up into a small ball and hugging a large pillow. A crimson quilt embroidered with magpies hid half of her face. She was deeply asleep.

No matter how unhappy Zhao Jie was feeling, the feeling disappeared when he saw the tears on her face. He sat down on the side of the couch and gently stroked her face. The tears had already dried and he couldn't use his fingers to wipe them away.

His heart ached. He helplessly said, "Silly girl." Why did she get angry with him like this?

Zhao Jie stood up. He took a towel from a nearby wooden frame, dampened it with water, and went back to carefully clean Wei Luo's face. The towel was slightly cold. Wei Luo instinctively moved backwards to avoid it and whimpered.

Zhao Jie smiled, put down the towel, and scratched her nose. "You're so delicate. What were you thinking? Not allowing someone by your side to serve you."

Wei Luo couldn't hear his words.

After finishing this, Zhao Jie found a purple and pink sleeping robe and changed Wei Luo's clothes. Then, he placed her back onto the couch, covered her with the quilt, and lied down next to her.

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When Wei Luo woke up on the next day, Zhao Jie had already left the mountain.

They were at an important phase in repairing the river channel today. Zhao Jie had to personally supervise. Even though he hadn't succeeding in coaxing Wei Luo, he still had to go and deal with work first.

While Wei Luo was having her hair brushed in the morning, she asked, "Who changed me into a sleeping robe last night?"

As Jin Lu added a golden and emerald butterfly hairpin into Wei

Luo's hair, she said in a slightly guilty tone, "It was the prince."

As she expected, Wei Luo stopped speaking.

After breakfast, just as Wei Luo was planning on walking around the villa, snowflakes floated down onto Wei Luo's head. She lifted her head to look at the sky. It was probably because she was on the top of a mountain. She felt like the sky was really close as if she could touch it if she reached her hand out.

The sparkling and translucent snowflakes made rustling sounds like falling flower petals. The falling snow seemed like a dense net that was spread open and would envelop everyone underneath it. The snowfall became heavier and heavier. Wei Luo didn't have another option. She could only return inside to hold a hand stove and look at the scene of the falling snow.

## Chapter 138.2

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On the other side, in Tong Zhou's city, they couldn't continue to build the dam for the river channel due to the sudden and heavy snowfall. They could only temporarily stop.

Tong Zhou's prefectural magistrate, Lin Qiu Tang suggested, "The snow doesn't look like it'll stop anytime soon. This one's humble home isn't far from here. Your Highness, how about coming to this official's residence to sit down for a bit and drink a hot cup of tea?"

Standing underneath an umbrella, Zhao Jie looked at the snow that was profusely falling into the river. A short while later, he nodded and said, "Okay."

Prefectural Magistrate Lin couldn't contain his joy. He hurriedly ordered people to go to his residence to prepare and reverently led Zhao Jie to a carriage as if he was in the presence of His Majesty. "I heard that the princess consort also came to Tong Zhou with Your Highness. Where is she staying? My humble home doesn't have much, but there are plenty of empty rooms. It's inconvenient to stay outside the city. How about asking the princess consort to move to my residence? My daughter could also keep her company."

Zhao Jie's face was expressionless. "She doesn't like to have any contact with strangers." Then he raised his eyes to look at Prefectural Magistrate Lin, "Sir Lin, you don't need to be concerned about this matter."

Prefectural Magistrate Lin didn't expect that Zhao Jie would be so straightforward in his refusal. He embarrassedly laughed and said, "This official has said too much."

When they arrived at Lin's residence, Lin Qiu Tang invited Zhao Jie to the main room and servants immediately came into the room with tea. Lin Qiu Tang discussed with Zhao Jie the problems

with the river channel at first. People that were able to reach this position all had some skills and talent. Lin Qiu Tang's insights were quite original. Many of them were useful.

However, Zhao Jie's expression seemed absent-minded as he listened.

An hour later, the snowfall outside became even heavier as time went on instead of stopping. Zhao Jie probably wouldn't be able to leave anytime soon. Zhao Jie thought of Wei Luo in Tian Chang Mountain. Was she still angry? It was such a heavy snowstorm. She should probably be staying inside, right?

He put down the teacup that had a colorful pattern of plum blossoms and sparrows, stood up, and said, "It seems that snow won't be stopping today. The construction for the dam will have to be delayed for a day. This prince will be leaving now."

Prefectural Magistrate Lin hadn't expected that he would leave right after saying those words. He was slightly disoriented for a moment as he hurriedly stood up and said, "This... this official will send off Your Highness."

Zhao Jie didn't take his words seriously as he walked out of the room.

Right after Zhao Jie left the main room, he saw a red figure braving the snow as she ran to the verandah. There were several freshly picked plum blossoms gathered in her arms. She called out to Lin Qiu Tang, "Daddy, it's such a heavy snowstorm. Why did you insist on having me pick plum blossoms? Ah..."

Before she could finish speaking, she raised her head and saw a handsome man next to her father. She immediately lost her voice.

This flower-like beauty was wearing a crimson cloak with a golden treasure pattern. Snow had fallen onto her head and shoulders. Her lips were red, her teeth were white, and her cheeks were rosy. All in all, she was a pretty daughter from a relatively

humble family. Perhaps, because the weather was too cold today, her nose was red from the cold. The moment when she saw Zhao Jie, her cheeks also turned red. She swallowed down all of her complaints and asked, "Daddy, who is this person?"

Lin Qiu Tan chuckled, walked forward, and introduced her to Zhao Jie, "Your Highness, this is my young daughter. Please excuse her poor behavior." Then, he stopped smiling and said to his daughter, "Rou-er, hurry and greet His Highness."

Lin Rou Yin blushed from embarrassment. When her father had said that a prince would be coming to Tong Zhou, she thought that the prince would be an old middle-aged man. Prince Jing was surprisingly young. Moreover, his appearance was incomparably handsome. Her heart skipped a beat. Lin Rou Yin timidly walked forward and said with a blushing face, "This subject greets Your Highness."

Right after these words were said, because her footing was unstable, her body stumbled and fell forward.

Zhao Jie furrowed his eyebrows. The angle that Lin Rou Yin's had fallen was very clever. She had fallen straight towards his chest. Even if he didn't reach out to support her, he would still be making contact with her body. In addition, it would only be reasonable to help a girl if she was falling down in front of you. Just as the other people thought that Zhao Jie would stretch out a hand to help her, he shifted a step to the side and adequately avoided Lin Rou Yin.

It was too late for Lin Rou Yin to stop her fall. She solidly fell onto the ground and felt a piercing pain coming from her ankle that was probably twisted.

Zhao Jie looked at her coldly without feeling the slightest bit moved. When he looked at Lin Qui Tang, his earlier politeness had changed into a warning. He coldly said, "Sir Lin, if you act this presumptions and foolish again, don't blame this prince for not

being polite.”

Scared, Lin Qui Tang started sweating despite the cold winter temperature. He realized that his petty tricks wouldn't work with Zhao Jie. He immediately kneeled down, “This official acknowledges his error in overstepping his authority. Your Highness, please forgive me.”

Lin Qui Tang had heard the rumors about Zhao Jie. He knew that he had an unreasonable temperament. He had been hoping to take advantage of this lucky change in weather to get the prince to take a fancy to his daughter. He hadn't expected that Zhao Jie would be disdainful of her and straightforwardly expose his intentions. It was very humiliating.

Zhao Jie lowered his eyes and looked at him. He lightly said, “Since you know you're wrong, then continue kneeling. The prince will come tomorrow morning.”

His words meant that he wanted him to kneel until tomorrow morning.

Prefectural Magistrate's face became deathly pale.

Zhao Jie left without looking back. He entered the carriage and headed towards Tian Chang Mountain.

It was only 2 PM when the carriage reached the top of the mountain. The sky shouldn't be dark yet, but the snowfall was too heavy and blocked the sunlight. Zhao Jie brushed off the snow on his shoulders before walking into the verandah and headed towards the bedroom. However, Zhao Jie felt that something seemed wrong as soon as he pushed open the doors. The room was extremely quiet. If Wei Luo was in the room, there would still be a little bit of sound even if she was still angry at him.

His eyes hesitantly moved back and forth, “Ah Luo?”

There wasn't a response.

Zhao Jie came out of the inner room and expressionlessly asked



Bai Lan, “Where’s the princess consort?”

Bai Lan trembled. She nervously kneeled down and acknowledged her mistake, “To respond to Your Highness, the princess consort went to the backside of the mountain...”

# Chapter 139.1

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Around noon and after Wei Luo finished lunch, she had said she wanted to go to the rear courtyard to walk around. Jin Lu and Bai Lan had wanted to go with her, but she stopped them. She had said, “I’m just going to walk around for a little bit in the rear courtyard. I’ll come back soon. You don’t need to follow. The villa isn’t big. I won’t get lost. I just want to be alone for a while.”

At that time, the snow wasn’t falling as heavy as now. Jin Lu and Bai Lan couldn’t persuade her to change her mind, so they could only obediently agree.

They had originally thought Wei Luo would return soon. Unexpectedly, she still hadn’t come back after an hour. Jin Lu and Bai Lan felt anxious. Seeing that the snowstorm was getting worse, they brought umbrellas with them as they searched the rear courtyard. But, they still couldn’t find Wei Luo and they started sweating despite the cold temperature.

They asked the servants in the rear courtyard and one of the servants said he saw Wei Luo heading towards the backside of the mountain. The servant had originally wanted to call out to stop her, but she had disappeared in a blink of an eye.

It was only at this moment that Jin Lu and Bai Lan realized the seriousness of the situation.

If Wei Luo really went to the backside of the mountain, based on the current weather, it was extremely likely for her to have an accident... Seriously?! Why did she go to the backside of the mountain at this time?

Just as the two of them wanted to tell the steward to send people to the backside of the mountain to look for her, Zhao Jie returned.

Jin Lu and Bai Lan were both kneeling on the ground. Although they knew that they had made a mistake, they were more worried

about Wei Luo's safety.

"Your Highness, please send people to the backside of the mountain to look for the princess consort. It'll be dark soon. The princess consort might meet danger... Everything is this servant's fault. This servant failed to watch over the princess consort and is willing to suffer punishment.

Zhao Jie eyebrows were furrowed. He clenched his hand around a rosewood chair's armrest. "When did Ah Luo leave?"

Jin Lu said, "It's been two hours."

It had been that long! Zhao Jie stood up and ordered Zhu Geng to summon the steward and all of the servants in the villa. After the situation was explained, most of the people were sent to look for Wei Luo in the backside of the mountain. When the servants found out that the princess consort was lost, they didn't dare to view this lightly. Each of them rallied their spirits and methodically set out to the backside of the mountain.

As for Zhao Jie, he said these words one by one, "Lock these two people and the other servant girls that serve the princess consort into the woodshed. If anything happens to the princess consort, they'll all be flogged to death."

Jin Lu and Bai Lan's face paled and their bodies felt weak.

But knowing that they had made a mistake first, they didn't struggle as they were brought to the woodshed.

Zhao Jie walked out of the inner room. His face looked frosty as he took the umbrella that Zhu Geng handed to him. Although he tried to calm himself down, he couldn't conceal the anxiousness in his behavior. "This prince will personally go the backside of the mountain to look. If there's any news, inform this prince immediately."

Shocked, Zhu Geng blurted out, "Your Highness, how can the respectable you go there? What if something happens? Let this

subordinate go instead...”

Zhao Jie didn't allow Zhu Geng to offer his opinion and interrupted him, “This prince told you to stay here. Do you not understand my words?”

He couldn't just stand by and do nothing while Wei Luo was out there, much less wait in an empty room. If he waited and received bad news, he wouldn't be able to forgive himself for the rest of his life.

Zhu Geng paused before giving in to Zhao Jie's demand, “Understood. This subordinate will obey Your Highness's order.”

Zhao Jie didn't respond. He walked towards the rear courtyard. The rear courtyard had a direct path to the backside of the mountain. He had heard from the servants that Wei Luo had left using that path. When Zhao Jie left the villa, the wind and snow was blowing from all directions. His front view was just a blanket of white and it was hard to identify which direction he should go. He took two steps forward and the snow submerged his ankles.

In this type of situation, it wasn't possible to move quickly. Wei Luo shouldn't have been able to walk far. Since she hadn't come back, there were only two possibilities. One was that she had gotten lost nearby. The second possibility was the she had encountered something dangerous...

Zhao Jie didn't dare to continue thinking about the second possibility. At this moment, he hated her to the point that his teeth felt itchy with the desire to bite her. Why didn't she stay inside when the weather was like this? Why did she stubbornly run outside? If he found her, he would definitely press her down and give her a thorough beating.

An hour later, all the people that had gone out to look for Wei Luo had come back to the villa. No one had any news of Wei Luo.

Zhao Jie's expression became increasingly ugly. He flung the cup

of hot tea that a servant had brought and the hot liquid splashed onto the ground. “Continue searching! If you can’t find her tonight, then none of you will live to see tomorrow.”

As soon as these words were said, the servants could only search harder in order to keep their heads.

Zhao Jie’s clothes were completely soaked. He went inside, changed his clothes, and went back outside. Zhu Geng knelt down in front of him and earnestly pleaded, “Your Highness, it’ll be dark soon. Please stay in the villa and wait to hear if there’s any news. It might be dangerous to go back out at this time.”

Zhao Jie completely ignored him and calmly walked past him.

At this time, the snowstorm had already stopped. However, the sky gradually got darker and even the afterglow from the setting sun was engulfed by the moonlight. Nightfall appeared quickly in the mountains without any transitional period. It had been daylight only fifteen minutes ago, but now they couldn’t even see their hands if they stretched them out.

There were wolves in the mountainside. Since they hadn’t been able to find Wei Luo yet, everything was pointing towards disaster.

Zhao Jie wasn’t the only one that felt someone was squeezing his heart. The servants in the villa also felt this way. After all, their lives were in the same basket as the princess consort’s right now. In light of Zhao Jie’s violent and tyrannical cruel behavior, no one had any hopes of living to see tomorrow if she wasn’t found tonight.

As the moon rose higher and higher, the people in the villa came back for the second time with their hearts turned to ashes. They all knelt down outside to wait for Zhao Jie’s punishment.

## Chapter 139.2

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Zhao Jie stood at the doorway. His malicious expression terrified the servants. His right hand clenched into a fist and he smashed his fist into the doorway. The doorway couldn't stand the forceful blow and an imprint of his fist was left in the wood. At this time, he didn't have the strength to rebuke them. He closed his eyes and hoarsely said, "Continue searching."

The servants looked at each other in dismay, then they stood up and said, "Understood, Your Highness..."

During the past few days, they had already realized that the princess consort was the prince's most precious person. She was someone that he placed in the innermost part of his heart. Normally, he couldn't even bear to accidentally wake her up when he left in the morning. If the princess consort died, they didn't know what would happen to the prince.

Everyone clearly understood that they had already searched the entire mountainside without seeing the princess consort. Something had most likely happened to her.

As long as they could find her, there would at least be a justification.

After tidying up their minds with this thought, just as they prepared to set out once more, they heard a voice coming from the verandah.

"What are you all looking for?"

It felt as if they were hearing a voice from the heavens.

Everyone looked towards that direction and saw Wei Luo wearing a pomegranate red cloak embroidered with a pattern of butterflies and lined with fox fur. She was in perfect condition without the slightest trace of injury and standing in the verandah. Her hair was slightly messy and her gaze was somewhat blank as if

she had just woken up.

Wei Luo looked at the servants, then she looked at Zhao Jie, who was standing at the doorway. She thought of the words she had heard on the way here. After pondering over those words, she vaguely understood what had happened.

Zhao Jie only stared at her without saying a word.

When Wei Luo reached his side, he hoarsely asked, "Where did you go?"

Wei Luo lowered her eyes and happened to see the slush on his shoes. He had probably been walking outside for a long time. He had only attended to changing his clothes and hadn't had time to change his shoes. The upper front parts of his shoes were completely soaked through.

She paused for a moment, then she pointed towards the verandah that was behind them. "It was too drafty in that room, so I went to the room behind here to take a nap. The floor heating in that room was too warm, so I accidentally slept until now."

Then, she looked at the servants in the courtyard and said, "You can all withdraw."

The servants felt like criminals that were given a pardon. They were like people that had been on the verge of a precipice and were suddenly pulled up to safety. They felt very grateful towards Wei Luo. Everything was good as long as she was fine.

Wei Luo walked back into their room. Zhao Jie looked at her back figure, then he followed after her.

Wei Luo went around the divider. She sat down in front of the bronze mirror that had a pattern of golden fauna, wiped off the melted snow from her face and hair, then she walked further inside to changed into a light purple robe that was slightly pink.

Jin Lu and Bai Lan weren't in the room. Those people from before had been looking for her, so it wasn't difficult for her to

imagine the unfavorable situation those two would be in right now. Zhao Jie must have been locked them up. Jin Lu and Bai Lan were her trusted servants. Zhao Jie probably wouldn't have harmed them for now.

Wei Luo walked towards the bed and leaned over to lift up the quilt. It seemed that she would have to sleep by herself. However, before she lied down, a pair of arms tightly wrapped around her waist. The strength of his arms was so great that it felt like she was being firmly bounded against his very hard chest.

"I looked for you for a long time." Zhao Jie's voice was hoarse and his arms were even slightly trembling.

He had really thought she had encountered danger. He didn't dare to think what his life would be like without her in the future. He never wanted to experience that feeling again.

Wei Luo turned around and pushed him away. She stood on the step that led to the bed and was barely able to see eye to eye with him. She asked him, "Did you think that I had run away from home?"

This time, Zhao Jie was really obedient. He didn't insist on hugging her, but he looked at her with a burning gaze as if he was looking at a regained treasure. No matter how much he looked, it wouldn't be enough.

He didn't need to answer. The answer was a definite yes.

Wei Luo pursed her lips as if she wanted to say something, but she slowly shifted her gaze away after looking at him for a moment. "That's a different issue. I'm a very reasonable person. Even if I'm angry and quarrel with you in the future, I still wouldn't run away from home."

Zhao Jie's recently changed out of clothes was hanging on a corner of a red sandalwood frame. It was very wet and there was even water dripping from it. She asked, "When did you come back?"



How long were you searching for me?”

Zhao Jie said, “I came back at 2PM. It wasn’t long, only four hours.”

Wei Luo remembered that when she returned from the rear courtyard, the snowstorm had gotten worse. A glance showed that it wouldn’t be stopping anytime soon, so she had decided to come back instead of continuing to stroll around the courtyard. The servant that had said he had seen her must be wrong.

He has actually searched for her in such a heavy snowstorm? Wasn’t he worried that something would happen to him?

It would be a lie if she said she wasn’t touched by his actions. This was the first time that Wei Luo felt Zhao Jie was utterly foolish. And he had the nerve to frequently call her foolish. She stopped the corners of her lips from curving up and deliberately asked in a serious tone, “Then, do you know what you were wrong about?”

Zhao Jie nodded, “That scholar was an ungrateful person with a corrupt character. He abandoned the person that had helped him. He truly deserves to be hacked into pieces.”

Seeing Wei Luo’s satisfied expression, he took a small step forward. He looked at her as he said, “Ah Luo, my words from yesterday were wrong. I never looked at you that way in the past and I definitely won’t in the future either. Back when we weren’t married yet, it was my fault for not controlling myself. Everything was absolutely my fault. Wouldn’t I be getting a cheap advantage if you injure your body from being too angry with me?”

Wei Luo tilted her head and directly looked at him, “Do you really think that?”

Zhao Jie’s phoenix eyes were dark and deep, “Really.”

Wei Luo attentively watched him for a while. She wanted to see if there were any traces of lies on his face, but she was unsuccessful.

A long time later, she slowly spread her arms open and said,  
“Okay, you can hug me.”

# Chapter 140.1

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Jin Lu and Bai Lan were let out of the shed. When the two of them found out that Wei Luo had been found, they let out sighs in relief.

Later, they also heard that Wei Luo had never gone to the backside of the mountain. She had only been sleeping in a back room for four hours. Because she had been sleeping, she didn't hear the loud movements. Moreover, the people in the courtyard had all thought she had gone to the backside of the mountain, so no one had carefully searched through the villa. This was why the huge, unexpected mistake had happened.

When Jin Lu and Bai Lan heard these words, they didn't know whether to cry or laugh. If their miss had slept any longer, the rest of the people in the villa would have probably died. As soon as they thought of Zhao Jie's oppressive presence, they continued to have lingering fears.

The two of them mustered up their spirits and energy. Then, they got hot water from the kitchen, fetched towels, and went to the bedroom to attend to Wei Luo.

"This servant's service was unsatisfactory and almost caused Your Highness to suffer. Please punish this servant."

There wasn't a response. Jin Lu and Bai Lan carefully raised their heads and saw an unexpected scene.

The hairpins in Wei Luo's hair had all been taken out and her glossy, black hair flowed downwards like a waterfall past her shoulders. It made her small face look as if it was the size of a palm. She was truly a beauty with her dark hair and a delicate face with snow-white skin.

Zhao Jie was covering her body and pressing her against the wall as he held her small face. He was kissing her like a thirsty person

that had finally seen water and like a hungry beast that had met a lamb and was impatiently sampling its delicious taste.

As Zhao Jie was kissing her white jade-like throat, he murmured, "Dearest, don't make trouble for me next time..."

Wei Luo's back was pressed against the wall. She was completely trapped in this small corner and her body seemed as if it would soon melt. She caught a glimpse of Jin Lu and Bai Lan's agitated faces behind the divider. She thumped Zhao Jie's chest with her fist and complained with a red face, "Who caused trouble for you? Get up. Your body is so hot. You must be getting a fever. Go take a hot bath to warm up your body."

When she had said, "Okay, you can hug me," she had only meant a simple hug! How could she have known that he would rush over like a dog that had seen a meaty bone treat? Wei Luo almost stopped breathing because of his frantic kisses.

It seemed like this had really terrified him.

When she had come out of the back room, she had seen his expression from far away. It was so gloomy that it was frightening. This was the first time that Wei Luo saw this expression. No wonder everyone else called "King of Hell". It wasn't a false reputation. Fortunately, he was never like that towards her.

Zhao Jie didn't move. His forehead was pressed against her neck and Wei Luo felt ticklish as she felt his warm exhaling breaths on her body. He had risked the dangers of snow and wind to look for her in the backside of the mountain and had also gotten himself completely soaked. He hadn't rested all evening and it seemed as if his body couldn't endure it anymore. When he had rushed over to hug her, Wei Luo had already noticed that something was wrong. However, Zhao Jie's strength had been too much at the time and Wei Luo couldn't break free, so she had partially retreated and partially went along with him. Now that her servant girls had come here, she couldn't let him continue to mess around.

Zhao Jie tightened his hold around her waist and lowly said, "Take a bath with me."

The bathing pool in the cleaning room was very spacious and had more than enough space to contain two people. Looking at his weak appearance, Wei Luo decided that he wouldn't be able to bath by himself and her heart would be uneasy if servant girls attended to him.

After hesitating for a moment, Wei Luo said to Jin Lu and Bai Lan, "Bring my clothes and the prince's clothes to the cleansing room. After taking out the towels and soap, you two can leave." Remembering that the two of them had suffered, she added, "I don't blame the two of you for what happened today. I was too willful and I won't punish the two of you. After the two of you leave, go and let out Yun Gua and Yu Suo."

Jin Lu and Bai Lan nodded. They had their heads properly lowered so that they didn't see the scene on the bed. "This servant will go right away."

Wei Luo supported Zhao Jie as they walked to the cleansing room. She put him down at the elmwood couch that was by the bathing pool and started to untie his sash. Honestly, Wei Luo had never attended to a man like this since she was born. She hadn't even attended to Chang Hong with taking a bath before. Although Wei Luo and Zhao Jie had been married for many days and had done everything there was to do, this was the first time she experienced something like this.

After she took off his clothes, Zhao Jie still fortunately had some consciousness. Wei Luo didn't have to exert that much strength when she pushed him into the bathing pool. However, right after Zhao Jie sat down in the bathing pool, he stretched his arm out and pulled Wei Luo down into the water!

Wei Luo was caught off guard. She fell into the bathing pool while still wearing clothes. She had fortunately fallen on top of

Zhao Jie's body and didn't suffer any injuries. She pulled herself up by pulling against his shoulders and angrily asked, "Why did you do that? My clothes are wet now."

Zhao Jie leaned against the bathing pool's wall. He lowered his eyes and chuckled, "You helped me take off my clothes. Courtesy demands reciprocity, so it was my turn to help you."

Wei Luo felt exasperated. This person was already this feverish and he still wasn't behaving properly.

There was nothing that could be done. Wei Luo could only comply with him.

Zhao Jie's movements were very slow and wasn't as quick as usual. Perhaps, it was because he was sick. Wei Luo closely looked at him and discovered that he was more obedient when he was sick. Perhaps, it was because he was tired. He leaned against the area between her clavicle and shoulders and his long eyelashes kept fluttering against her skin. It felt strange and itchy.

While Wei Luo was lost in her thoughts, he firmly sucked a spot on her neck. Surprised, she lowered her head to look at her reflection in the water. "What will I do if I see other people tomorrow?"

Zhao Jie's brain wasn't completely muddled. He readily gave her good advice, "Then don't see anyone else. We'll stay in our room for a day."

## Chapter 140.2

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Wei Luo glanced at him in rebuke. She knew that his words were impossible. “Isn’t the river channel still being fixed? If you don’t go, what if someone sends a memorial to the emperor accusing you of misconduct? What will you if His Majesty blames you?”

He didn’t say a word. But in his mind, he thought that even if Tong Zhou’s prefectural magistrate’s courage was increased to 100%, there would still be no one that would dare to accuse him of misconduct. Zhao Jie held Wei Luo’s hand. His face was pressed against her face and he slowly whispered, “Ah Luo, I’m not feeling well.”

Wei Luo’s small face had been steamed pink and tender by the hot spring. Hearing his words, she took her hand out from his and placed it against his forehead, “You’re sick. Of course, you’re not feeling well.”

When Zhao Jie was sick, he was exceptionally shameless. He was thick-skinned to begin with, now it was to the point of unmatched. He said, “If you kiss me, I’ll feel better.”

Wei Luo paused and did her best to righteously say, “Properly take your bath!”

Zhao Jie, “...”

However, seeing his pitiful appearance, Wei Luo lowered her head, kissed him, and asked, “Satisfied?”

Zhao Jie originally had another intention. But after considering that he might pass on his cold to Wei Luo, he could only put this intention to rest for the sake of Wei Luo’s health.

Anyways, the bath couldn’t possibly be more emotional touching. After the two of them reconciled, they were so harmonious that it was as if they were one person. There were more affectionate with each other now than before their argument

had happened. Of course, most of the time it was Zhao Jie that was unwilling to be apart from Wei Luo.

After the bath was done, Wei Luo helped Zhao Jie dry off. Zhao Jie's moon white sleeping robe was fortunately not complicated. But, Zhao Jie was too tall. It was very tiring for Wei Luo to put the robe on him. She had to stand on her tiptoes to reach him and she couldn't help clinging onto his chest as she did this. Wei Luo was only wearing a thin, gauzy robe that couldn't block much. Only a short while later, she felt his change...

Flustered and exasperated, Wei Luo glared at him. "You!"

Zhao Jie smiled and nipped at her lips. He innocently said, "It's not my fault. You tempted me."

What a fallacious argument. Wei Luo ignored him, turned around, and started walking out. "You can dress yourself."

Jin Lu and Bai Lan had gone to pass on Wei Luo's order, so there was no one in the inner room right now.

The other servants were tactfully staying outside just in case they needed to be sent on an errand. They clearly understood that the prince and princess consort had reconciled and wouldn't want anyone inside to get in their way.

Zhao Jie tied a sapphire blue sash that was embroidered with persimmon stems around his waist, then he stepped forward, unwarrantedly pick up Wei Luo, and placed her down on the bed. He was hugging her from the back. Still feeling worried, he said with a voice that held a rarely heard grievance, "Ah Luo, let's not argue in the future."

Wei Luo turned around to look at him. She pursed her small lips and said, "You were the one that made me angry first."

Zhao Jie immediately followed her words by saying, "Everything was my fault. I shouldn't have said such disgraceful words. Haven't the heavens already punished me by not letting me find



you and suffering the windy chill?”

Wei Luo grumbled, “Smooth talker.” However, her appearance showed that she really wasn’t angry anymore.

She suddenly thought of something after hearing Zhao Jie’s words. She touched his forehead, then she touched her own forehead. “Do you feel better? Does this villa have a doctor, or cold medicine that was prepared in advance? I’ll have people bring it over here.”

Zhao Jie grasped her small hand and intertwined their fingers. He said with a smile, “It’s only a small cold. I’m not as delicate as you. I’ll be fine by tomorrow.”

Wei Luo skeptically asked, “Really?”

“Why would I lie to you?” So that she would believe him, Zhao Jie opened up the quilt and wrapped it around the two of them. His chin was pressed her forehead and he softly said, “It’s late. Let’s go to sleep.”

Seeing that his complexion had improved after the bath and that his temperature wasn’t as hot as before, Wei Luo believed his words. Lying in his embrace, she closed her eyes and soon fell asleep.

However, the truth proved that men were the type that boasted too much.

On the next morning, not only did Zhao Jie’s temperature not decrease, it burned worse than yesterday. Hugging him was like hugging a furnace. When she felt his forehead again, it was burning hot!

Wei Luo felt anxious and regretful. She shouldn’t have listened to his words last night. How could he get better from a cold without seeing a doctor or eating medicine? She hurriedly had Jin Lu inform the steward to send someone to descend the mountain and bring back a doctor. Then, she dampened a handkerchief with cold

water and placed it against his forehead several times.

Zhao Jie slowly opened his eyes and grinned. “It was worth getting sick.”

Wei Luo pinched his waist. “Stop speaking, be good and stay lied down.” She didn’t feel comfortable after saying these words, so she threatened, “If you don’t take care of your body better in the future, I won’t care about you.”

Zhao Jie grabbed the hand that had pinched him and said with a smile, “If you don’t care about me, then who will look after me?”

There were plenty of people that wanted to look after him. Even though she knew that his words were false, Wei Luo still enjoyed hearing these words.

An hour later, a doctor had rushed over here. He checked Zhao Jie’s pulse and his temperature, wrote out a prescription, took out medicine, and said, “The prince has a healthy body. Most people would be muddle-headed when their temperature is this high. Your Highness, please have people prepare the medicine by following this prescription. The prince will be fine after drinking four to five doses of the medicine. Also, don’t let the prince be exposed to chilly weather during the next two days.”

Wei Luo nodded. She had Jin Lu pay the doctor three times the normal medical fee and sent Bai Lan off to prepare the medicine. Once the medicine was done, she personally fed Zhao Jie.

Now that Zhao Jie was sick, the construction for the river channel would be delayed by two days. In addition, yesterday’s snowfall had been too heavy and it would delay future progress. The young couple had to stay in Tong Zhou for an additional half month. By the time the river channel was repaired and they started traveling back to the capital, it was already near the end of the year.

On the day that Wei Luo and Zhao Jie arrived at the capital, it

was New Year's Eve. Emperor Chong Zhen had especially set up a family banquet and they had been invited.

# Chapter 141.1

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The capital had a festive atmosphere for New Year's Eve. From house to house, there were large red lanterns hanging at the front doorways and papers pasted on the sides of the doorways. There was a celebratory poem written vertically down on these papers. The first verse of the poem was "The people will live in peace during this country's golden age." The second verse of the poem was "The weather will be favorable for crops. Praise the splendid New Year."

A vermillion-lacquered carriage with a domed umbrella-like roof and two horses at the front passed through the streets. There were few children wearing cotton-padded jackets and holding firecrackers. After lighting a firecracker, they smiled as a firecracker was thrown in the carriage's path.

Before the firecracker could make any sounds, a small flying stone extinguished the spark on the firecracker.

The children looked at each other in dismay. None of them understood what had happened.

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It was noon when Wei Luo and Zhao Jie returned to Prince Jing's residence. The steward had managed the residence well. Although the owners had been gone for a month, the residence was in perfect order and there wasn't any difference between now and when they had left. Inside and outside, everything was neat and clean.

After Wei Luo and Zhao Jie hurriedly ate lunch, Wei Luo went to the cleansing room to take a bath. Then, she changed into a clean set of clothes and fell asleep as soon as she lied down and her head touched the pillow. In order to return here sooner, they rarely stopped to rest on the way here. Wei Luo didn't complain much despite how tiring the journey had been.

After Zhao Jie freshened up, he looked at Wei Luo's sleeping face and leaned over to kiss her forehead. Then, he turned around and went to the study. He called over Yang Hao and Steward Wang, asked them what happened in the capital recently, and handled some official work. When he raised his head again to look at the sky, it was time to light the lamps. It was soon be time to go the palace to attend the family banquet.

Zhao Jie returned to the bedroom to wake up Wei Luo, "Little fellow, wake up."

Wei Luo was feeling very sleepy. At this moment, she didn't want to wake up at all. She whimpered and retreated her head into the quilt like a kitten that was acting cutely spoiled. Zhao Jie couldn't help laughing. He rarely saw her showing such a pitiful appearance. He lifted the quilt that was covering her head, leaned over, and kissed her little mouth.

Wei Luo couldn't breath because of his kisses. She used both of her hands to push him away. She was completely awake now. Feeling both angry and helpless, she asked, "What are you doing?"

Zhao Jie pinched her small face and felt that the sensation of touching her smooth and tender skin was really enjoyable. "A certain small creature was acting spoiled and wouldn't get up. Husband couldn't wake her up and could only use this method."

Wei Luo slowly sat up, gathered up her long hair, and didn't go along with his mischievousness. "Go and tell Jin Lu and Bai Lan to come inside."

5PM had just recently passed. It wasn't too late yet. There were still two more hours before the palace banquet. Wei Luo sat down in front of a bronze mirror and brushed her hair. She had just woken up, so her mind wasn't very clear. She used a soft brush to apply a thin layer of jasmine pearl powder on her face. It greatly improved her complexion and spirit. She went behind the divider to change clothes.

When about an hour had passed, she saw that Zhao Jie was spying on her when she turned around. He was leaning against the door with his arms crossed and smiling at her.

Wei Luo walked to his side. Feeling somewhat uneasy, she asked, “Why are you smiling?”

Zhao Jie scratched her nose, then he held her hand and started walking outside. “I’m smiling because my Ah Luo is becoming more and more beautiful, to the point that I can’t look away.”

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After they entered the palace, they walked to the lake that was in the western part of the palace.

The family banquet was set up at a pavilion that was at the heart of the lake. The pavilion was called Sheng Xue. Because it was a family banquet, the court officials and the other high-ranked nobles weren’t invited. There were only the members of the imperial family and their noble spouses. When Wei Luo and Zhao Jie reached the jiu qu qiao, they saw the brightly lit and splendid Sheng Xue. The eunuchs and palace servant girls were busily carrying fruits and pastries back and forth. When the servants encountered them on the jiu qu qiao, they properly saluted, “Greetings Your Highness Prince Jing, Greetings Your Highness Princess Consort Jing.”

When they arrived at Sheng Xue, there were already many people there. Besides the elder princesses, there were also princes and princesses wearing magnificently embroidered clothing and showing happy expressions. Perhaps, the festivity of celebrating the passing of the year infected them. They all seemed very happy and weren’t as reserved as usual. A few thick-faced ones had already started begging for red envelopes from the elder princesses. It almost seemed like this was a normal family that was celebrating New Year’s Eve.

Wei Luo instinctively looked around. She only saw Elder Princess

Ping Yang and Elder Princess An Yang. She didn't see the figure of Elder Princess Gao Yang. When she thought about it, it wasn't strange. That type of thing had happened to Zhao Xuan's family. Her husband had been recently beheaded and she had to wearing mourning clothes for three years. She wouldn't be expected to attend a gathering like this one.

Ninth prince Zhao Chen was pleasantly surprised when he saw Zhao Jie and Wei Luo. He left the crowd of people and came over to ask, "Imperial brother, when did you come back from Tong Zhou? I made a bet with seventh imperial brother and eighth imperial brother that you definitely wouldn't come to this banquet. I didn't expect that you would be able to get here in time at the end." He turned to this side, immediately put away his mischievous smile, and courteously and properly said, "Second imperial sister-in-law."

Wei Luo smiled and nodded, "Ninth brother."

Ninth prince had the best relationship with Zhao Jie out of all the princes and was the only that dared to joke around with him. The other princes more or less feared Zhao Jie. They all came forward to meticulously greet him one by one and didn't dare to act like Zhao Chen.

Wei Luo had prepared many red envelopes before coming here. They would be given to the unmarried princes. Wei Luo had also prepared gifts for the unmarried princesses. Those young princes were scared by Zhao Jie's imposingness and didn't dare to come close. But seeing Wei Luo's brightly smiling face, they couldn't resist wanting to get closer. So, one of them quietly walked to her side to ask for a red envelope and said with cheerful laughter, "Thank you second imperial sister-in-law!"

Wei Luo stroked twelfth prince's head. The little fellow was only eight years old with white teeth and red lips. He looked delicate and cute. When he smiled, there was a gap between his teeth. It was cute and funny. Wei Luo said, "Your welcome. You can go

play.”

As a result, there were more people that came to Wei Luo’s side to ask for a red envelope. It wasn’t because there was anything special about Wei Luo’s red envelopes. It was because these people were really curious about this couple. They normally didn’t dare to joke with Zhao Jie, but it was different now that Wei Luo was here. This greatly satisfied their eagerness for novelty. Moreover, Zhao Jie had ruthlessly closed the doors without letting them see Wei Luo on the wedding night, so they hadn’t been able to make a fuss at the time. Tonight was New Year’s Eve, so they freely joked and boisterously chattered.

A short while later, the red envelopes that Wei Luo had prepared were all given away.

One by one, the princes thanked Wei Luo and Zhao Jie. Their expression and smiles were more sincere.

Zhao Jie showed a hint of rarely seen warmth and he lightly said, “No need to be so courteous.” Then, he led Wei Luo towards the two elder princesses to salute them, “Second paternal aunt, third paternal aunt.”

Wei Luo had met Elder Princess Ping Yang and Elder Princess An Yang before, so she didn’t feel as if they were unfamiliar people. Wei Luo stepped forward to say a few words with them and they each gave Wei Luo a red envelope. Then, after Wei Luo gave gifts to the princesses that she saw, she saw Zhao Liuli gesturing at her from behind a vermillion-lacquered pillar that was carved with dragons and clouds. Wei Luo used an excuse to leave the group of people. Then, she went over to Zhao Liuli and asked, “Why didn’t I see you earlier?”



## Chapter 141.2

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Zhao Liuli was wearing a red jacket embroidered with numerous butterflies in Su style, a dark green pleated skirt embodied with scenes of the jade girl carrying gifts, and a moon white cloak. She looked slightly embarrassed. When Wei Luo got closer, she whispered, “Before you came, second and third paternal aunt were openly discussing about my marriage. I didn’t have a better idea, so I hid behind here.”

Wei Luo turned her head to look. She didn’t expect that the two elder princesses would be so warm-hearted. She turned her head back and asked Liuli, “Did you say anything to Empress Chen? Did Yang Zhen send you any letters?”

Zhao Liuli shook her head. Her two slender eyes brows were twisted. She turned around, placed her elbow on the railing for support, and rested her chin in her hand. “I decided to wait until older brother Yang Zhen comes back. He probably won’t be able to write a letter while he’s in the army. Even if he writes a letter, he won’t have a way to deliver the letter into the palace. Right now, I don’t know how he’s been.”

Wei Luo thought for a moment before saying, “I’ll talk with your older brother later to see if he has a way to make contact with Yang Zhen. If he receives any news about Yang Zhen, I’ll enter the palace to tell you.”

Delighted, Zhao Liuli hurriedly hugged Wei Luo and said with a smile, “Older imperial sister-in-law treats me the best.”

Although Zhao Liuli was one year older than Wei Luo, she easily and smoothly called her “older imperial sister-in-law.”

After they finished talking about this, Zhao Liuli looked around. Seeing that there was no one around, she whispered into Wei Luo’s ear, “Ah Luo, do you know what happened to Li Xiang?”

Wei Luo blinked, “What could have happened to her?”

Wei Luo had spent the entire month in Tian Chan Mountain, so she didn’t know what had recently happened in the capital. Now that Zhao Liuli was asking her this, she really didn’t have any ideas.

Zhao Liuli added, “I heard that when Li Xiang went to Temple Ci to burn incense a month ago, she met with a mishap for some unknown reason. She was robbed by bandits and stayed in the mountain woods overnight...” She paused before saying in absolutely horrified tone, “A wild animal gnawed off half of her leg.”

Wei Luo’s eyes were opened so wide that they were like circles, “Really?”

Zhao Liuli seriously nodded. She shuddered as soon as she imagined that scene. “Imperial mother told me this. It was so terrifying to hear. Imperial father ordered people to send over tonics to express his condolences. Elder Princess Gao Yang didn’t make a public appearance. She said she was staying at home to keep Li Xiang company. Li Xiang tried to kill herself for a month before she finally calmed down a few days ago.”

Zhao Liuli sympathetically thought. Even if tonics were sent over, what use would they have? Li Xiang would forever be a cripple.

Wei Luo didn’t have much of a reaction after hearing this. She didn’t feel sympathetic. After all, there was a deeply ingrained long-standing resentment between her and Li Xiang. She wasn’t a noble person that could requite evil with good. She was only curious. From Zhao Liuli’s words, it seemed as if someone had deliberately wanted to harm Li Xiang. Who hated her that much?

As she was wondering this, the emperor and empress arrived.

Emperor Chong Zhen and Empress Chen were walking side to

side and Noble Consort Ning was following behind them. Empress Chen was wearing a red robe with wide sleeves. The robe was embroidered with auspicious clouds and symbols. There was a dragon and phoenix crown on her head. She looked dignified and elegant and her beauty was majestic. Compared to Empress Chen, Noble Consort Ning's red jacket that was embroidered with the four seasons seemed too lowborn.

Everyone kneeled down to salute. Emperor Chong Zhen and Empress Chen sat down at the head of the long, red sandalwood table. He waved his hand and said, "You can all rise. Since it's a family banquet, just act normal. There's no need say or do anything unnecessarily elaborate."

Everyone sat down in order. Wei Luo sat down next to Zhao Jie. The third prince and the third princess consort were sitting next to them.

The family banquet smoothly started. First, Emperor Chong Zhen asked the young princes what they had achieved from their studies this year. Then, he asked Zhao Jie what he had seen and heard in Tong Zhou. Zhao Jie's answer was watertight. She could see that Emperor Chong Zhen was very pleased.

When the banquet had progressed to halfway, it was time for the mood of the banquet to be at its best. But, Noble Consort Ning's silence was completely incompatible with the noisy surroundings.

Emperor Chong Zhen glanced at her and asked, "Noble Consort Ning, why are you frowning? What's there to be unhappy about?"

Noble Consort Ning put down her wine cup, respectfully half rose up from her chair, and said, "This consort has acted disrespectful by disturbing His Majesty's refined and elegant state of mind."

Her eyes were red. She was a well-maintained woman in her thirties that looked as if she was in her twenties. "This consort is just feeling heartache when I see this lively occasion and think

about how Zhang-er can only stay at home without anyone to accompany him.”

Emperor Chong Zhen lowered his eyes. The smile on his face didn't change. He only thought-provokingly asked, “Noble Consort Ning, you're thinking about old five?”

Seeing that he wasn't angry, Noble Consort mustered up her courage to plead, “Your Majesty had said that Zhang-er would be confined at his home for three months. Two months had already passed. Could you pardon him in advance? That way he could also have a peaceful and steady New Year.”

Emperor Chong Zhen didn't immediately speak. Perhaps, he was considering her request.

At the side, Empress Chen stood up with a calm expression and said, “This consort isn't feeling well and won't be able to accompany His Majesty in seeing the New Year. Your Majesty, enjoy yourself. This consort will be leaving first.”

## Chapter 142.1

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The princes had sharp eyes and already saw that the situation was amiss. The sound of their chattering suddenly quieted down and they also temporarily stopped making toasts and drinking. They quietly looked at the emperor and empress. Normally, a consort shouldn't attend this type of family gathering. However, Noble Consort Ning had become more and more favored during the past years and Emperor Chong Zhen had given her a rare honor by allowing her to attend. This was why she was able to proudly sit here.

Emperor Chong Zhen put down his xi jiao cup that was decoratively carved with pine trees, bamboo stalks, and plum trees. The smile on his face had completely vanished. He half turned his body towards Empress Chen's direction and said, "The banquet is only half over. If the empress leaves, what will these children think?"

Seeing that Empress Chen's expression didn't look good, he changed his tone and said, "If you're really not feel well, an imperial doctor should be immediately called over without delay to check."

"Thank you for your concern, Your Majesty. This consort is just feeling dizzy and will feel better after resting for a bit. It's not serious." Empress Chen's words were as deferent as usual, but there wasn't any warmth in her eyes. It was as if she viewed talking to Emperor Chong Zhen as only a type of duty. She didn't smile until she looked at Wei Luo and said, "Ah Luo, help me walk back. We haven't seen each other in a while. I have words that I want to say to you."

Wei Luo looked at Zhao Jie. Afterwards, she obediently stood up, walked to Empress Chen's side, and supported her with her arm. "Sure, daughter-in-law also has things to say with imperial mother."

Emperor Chong looked at the two of them walking away and suddenly felt that this family banquet had become dull. His expression slightly sunk, but he didn't say a word.

Zhao Jie arranged for two people to follow after Wei Luo and Empress Chen and protect their safety.

Seeing that mood had become stiff, Ninth prince Zhao Zhen suggested that everyone think of a phrase with the prompt being "New Year". Emperor Chong Zhen didn't voice an opinion and seemed to tacitly agree. As a result, the princes and princesses racked their brains to think of something. If they could think of a good phrase and gain Emperor Chong Zhen's favor, it would be the absolute best.

Ninth prince confidently started, "An impoverish era is setting, the opening of a beautiful season."

After ninth prince, it was twelfth prince. Twelfth prince was young, so he used a famous poet's words, "The sound of firecrackers ends a year, the spring breeze brings warmth."

The other princes also said their lines. When it was Zhao Jie's turn, he turned the wine cup in his hand and indifferently said, "Keeping guard until the bells ring, holding a candle to welcome the New Year."

Although the words were simple, he continued to speak in an uninhibited and heroic manner,

"The winter air longs for the arrow, the spring scenery waits for the rooster's cries, Losing interest in the overflowing jar, observing over the fence, There will be a thousand years, paying respect at the emperor's door."

Emperor Chong Zhen nodded.

After a few rounds of this poetry game, seventh prince was the one that was fined the most. Emperor Chong Zhen commented, "It seems that old seven has been slacking in his studies. Even little

twelve is doing better than you.”

Seventh prince was so ashamed that his entire face was flushed. “This imperial son has failed to meet imperial father’s expectations and will definitely painstakingly study after returning home. Won’t...”

Emperor Chong Zhen waived his hand. He didn’t feel like continuing to listen to these words, “Never mind. You only have a mouth that says things without following through. Just sit down.”

After three rounds of wine, the family banquet was almost over. The group of people prepared to go up to Sheng Xue’s third level to admire the fireworks. Just as Emperor Chong Zhen stood up, Noble Consort Ning came over to lend an arm to support him in walking upstairs. Seeing that he still hadn’t expressed his position about the issue, she couldn’t help mentioning again, “Your Majesty, this consort’s words from before... Zhang-er...”

Emperor Chong Zhen turned his head to look at Noble Consort Ning, “Consort Ning, this emperor has already considered the matter about old five. Let the matter drop. If you keep asking, this emperor will feel annoyed.”

Noble Consort Ning was startled. It was only now that she realized he hadn’t forgotten. He was deliberately not expressing an opinion. Scared, she explained, “Your Majesty, please quell your anger. This consort was too anxious and temporarily lost my senses out of concern... If this topic causes Your Majesty to be unhappy, this consort won’t mention this again.”

Emperor Chong Zhen watched her and said words that had an unclear meaning, “If you’re worried about old five, this emperor will send people to check up on him.”

Noble Consort Ning wasn’t a fool. She could hear that his “to check up” wasn’t as simple as showing concern. There was definitely another meaning behind those words.

And so, she quickly said, “Zhang-er made a mistake. It’s only naturally that he’s confined at home. This will be a good opportunity for him to reflect on his behavior. This consort was slow-witted and shouldn’t have doubted Your Majesty’s intention.”

There wasn’t much of an expression on Emperor Chong Zhen’s face and he didn’t respond.

Noble Consort Ning was worried that Emperor Chong Zhen was annoyed by her earlier words, so she hastily said words to curry favor, “Let this consort help Your Majesty up the stairs.”

Emperor Chong Zhen nodded. He didn’t seem as if he was blaming her.

The view from Sheng Xue’s third floor was excellent. If they stood here during the daytime, they could see all of the buildings in the palace. There was no moon tonight and the clear lake surface didn’t gleam with reflected light. The night was darker than usual until a loud explosive noise was heard from the lakeside. A brightly multi-colored firework suddenly blossomed in the sky. It was followed by firework after firework and the sounds overlapped each other. These fireworks lit up the sky above the lake as if it was daytime.

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Wei Luo accompanied Empress Chen as they left the lake and walked to Qing Xi Palace. Just as they reached the bottom of Zhao Yang Hall’s stairway that led to the entrance, they saw that fireworks were being set off at the lake. Standing at the top of the staircase, they could see part of the fireworks show. At this time, Empress Chen wasn’t in a hurry to enter the hall. She stood by the entrance and surveyed the scene from an elevated position. Her eyes were overflowing with melancholy.

Wei Luo called out, “Imperial mother, weren’t you feeling unwell? It’s windy outside. It’ll be easy to get sick if you stay



outside for too long.”

Empress Chen returned to her senses, turned around to face her, and smiled. In a calm and relaxed tone, she said, “Who said I was feeling unwell? I’m feeling perfectly fine.”

Wei Luo blinked. Didn’t she say those words herself?

Empress Chen didn’t mind saying the truth to Wei Luo. As she started walking into Zhao Yang Hall, she honestly said, “I was only lying to the emperor. If I didn’t say that, how would I be able to return here so early?”

She saw down on the ironwood arhat couch and called Wei Luo to her side. “Ah Luo, you’re this empress’s daughter-in-law, so this empress will treat you as a trustworthy person. This is why I’m telling you this.”

Wei Luo sat down across from her. After thinking, she asked, “Imperial mother, do you dislike attending the family banquets?”

“It’s the same each year. Other than eating, it’s poetry games. There’s nothing new.” Empress Chen ordered people to bring tea and water. Perhaps, it was because she was thirsty. After she picked up the brightly color cup that had a pattern of daffodils and auspicious symbols, she drained the cup of jasmine honey water in one gulp.

She paused after drinking, then she let out a heavy sigh and said, “Actually, it’s not that I dislike it. I just felt that it was especially unpleasant to look at Consort Ning tonight. If I had to continue to sit there, I would lose my self-control in front of the children. That’s why I thought about leaving early.”

Wei Luo took a sip of the jasmine honey water. It was tasty and refreshing, with just the right amount of sweetness. She asked, “Why does imperial mother dislike Noble Consort Ning?”

Right after she said these words, she felt that her question was stupid. Was there any woman that would like someone that stole

her husband?

However, Empress Chen's words following words left her stunned.

## Chapter 142.2

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Empress Chen said, “A month ago, when House Li met with trouble, Elder Prince Gao Yang came here to plead with this empress. She told me something.” She stopped with her eyes full of guilt. “Guess why Liuli has been sick since she was a child.”

Wei Luo held the colorful cup and slowly asked, “It is it related to Noble Consort Ning?”

Empress Chen said, “Someone poisoned Liuli was she was only a year old. She almost didn’t recover. The imperial doctor had to treat her for three days and three nights to save her life. At the time, Consort Shu was the one that was found guilty of poisoning Liuli and His Majesty ordered Consort Shu’s death. This empress always felt suspicious and finally confirmed a few days ago that Consort Ning was the one that was responsible.”

Wei Luo asked, “Since it’s like that, why doesn’t imperial mother tell His Majesty and ask His Majesty to hold Noble Consort Ning responsible?”

Empress Chen laughed and said, “What difference would it make if I told him this? I don’t have any hope that he’ll stand on my side. I only ask that Liuli and Chang Sheng can peacefully live out their lives. I don’t have any other requests.” Moreover, she had something, but the emperor didn’t believe her. He was wholeheartedly determined to protect Consort Ning. She had long given up on having any hopes toward Emperor Chong Zhen.

Wei Luo was extremely surprised. So, this was the sticking point between the emperor and empress. Empress Chen’s heart had died and Emperor Chong didn’t understand why. It wasn’t surprising that the empress remained indifferent no matter what Emperor Chong Zheng did.

Empress Chen added, “As long as Chang Sheng succeeds in the future, this empress won’t worry about punishing Noble Consort

Ning.”

It wasn't wrong for her to think this way. Zhao Jie was the son of the main wife. He should be inheriting the position of emperor. However, Wei Luo couldn't help thinking about her past life. Why did the emperor pass on his position to Zhao Zhang? Why was Zhao Jie willing to be a regent?

She carefully thought. At that time, Liuli and Empress Chen had died one after another. Zhao Jie's originally cold temperament had become even more tyrannical. When people mentioned him in the capital, they would tremble. Although Zhao Zhang was the emperor, Zhao Jie had the full support of the court officials and total control. During morning court, there was even another chair added next to the throne for Zhao Jie to sit in. It seemed as if the situation that had occurred for the Second Zhou Dynasty was appearing again. There had been gossip in the streets that Zhao Zhang wouldn't be able to keep his position as emperor for long. Zhao Jie would be taking it soon.

As for whether or not Zhao Jie was able to take back his birthright, Wei Luo didn't know. She had already died by then.

Would the same mistakes be made in this life? Or, would Zhao Jie successfully inherit the throne?

Under the current circumstances, Zhao Zhang had already lost and wouldn't be a threat unless Emperor Chong Zhen's brain was broken and insisted on making Zhao Zhang the crown prince. If that were to happen, the court officials would be able to drown him just by the sheer amount of their complaints.

Wei Luo suddenly thought of something and asked, “I heard that imperial mother has recently been looking for a husband for Liuli?”

At the mention of this, Empress Chen's expression eased. She sighed and said, “Liuli doesn't like any of the people that I selected.”

Wei Lui pursed her lips into a smile. Zhao Liuli's heart already had a person. Of course, she wouldn't be interested in anyone else. She persuaded, "Imperial mother, you don't need to be anxious about this. Liuli has a noble and precious status. She can't just randomly marry someone. Besides, is imperial mother willing to part with her?"

Empress Chen was naturally unwilling. But, so what if she was unwilling? She couldn't forbid her daughter from marrying for the rest of her life.

Wei Luo said, "Liuli recently told me that she's reluctant to separate from you. She wants to stay by your side and accompany you for two more years... But, she's worried that you'll be angry. That's why she hasn't said anything. She asked me to express her thoughts to you."

Empress Chen felt angry and helpless as she said, "This child... There's nothing that she can't tell me. What can I do to her? Eat her?"

Wei Luo laughed and didn't say anything.

Wei Luo accompanied Empress Chen and had a long conversation with her. This was the first time they had such a long conversation while seated side by side after they had become mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. Their conversation was very carefree and they talked about everything. Without noticing, two hours had passed and the family banquet at Sheng Xue had ended a while ago.

When Zhao Jie arrived at Zhao Yang Hall, he saw his young wife sitting at vermillion-lacquered table that was inlaid with gold and carved with spirals. She was drinking congee and eating daikon that had been marinated in a sweet liquid.

Zhao Jie stepped forward, sat down on the couch, stretched his arms out, and brought her into his embrace, "Where's imperial mother?"

Wei Luo's congee almost spilled out. She complained, "Big brother, why didn't you say something first? Imperial mother went to sleep. I was hungry, so I had them prepare something in the kitchen and bring it over here."

Zhao Jie chuckled, "Why do I have to say something before I hug my wife?"

Wei Luo smelled the scent of alcohol on his body and knew that he had drunk a lot. She scooped up a spoonful of chicken congee with shiitake mushroom and brought it to his lips, "You probably haven't eaten much, right? Are you hungry? Do you want me to order people to bring more food over? Imperial mother said that I could tell them to make me whatever food I want."

Zhao Jie drank the spoonful of congee that she was holding, then he held her chin and kissed her. "Let's stop eating and go home."

Wei Luo nodded and stood up from the couch, "Let's go then."

Zhao Jie asked, "What did you talk about with imperial mother?"

Wei Luo stopped moving for a moment. She thought of Empress Chen's eyes that was as apathetic as clear water. She couldn't resist honestly asking Zhao Jie, "Big brother, could you help me with two things?"

Zhao Jie raised an eyebrow. "Tell me."

Wei Luo first mentioned the full story behind Zhao Liuli being poisoned. "If this matter is related to Noble Consort Ning, you have to let His Majesty know the truth..."

Zhao Jie's eyes darkened. Empress Chen had never mentioned this matter to him. He had only been eight years old when Liuli had been poisoned and didn't know the inside story. Since Wei Luo had asked him, he naturally couldn't let the matter go. He said, "I'll have the matter clearly investigated. And the second matter is?"

As for the second request, Wei Luo looked around and after

confirming that there were no palace servants near them, she stood on her tiptoes and whispered into Zhao Jie's ear, "Could you order people to make discreet inquiries about Yang Zhen's current situation? He's been gone for two months. Liuli is very worried."

Zhao Jie turned his head to directly look at her. He pinched her cheeks and said, "You're very attentive towards other people's affairs."

Seeing that he was jealous, Wei Luo smiled and wrapped her arms around his neck to lean closer to his body. She loudly kissed his cheek and said, "Big brother possess remarkable abilities. These things are a piece of cake to you! Right?"

Zhao Jie pointed at his lips, "It only works if you kiss here."

Wei Luo didn't have another option. She stuck closer to his body and kissed him a few more times.

When they left Zhao Yang Hall, Zhao Yang Hall's palace servant girls had red faces that resembled cooked shrimp. Prince Jing and Princess Consort Jing had been so affectionate with each other. Prince Jing didn't have any of his usual solemn appearance in front of the princess consort. The love in his eyes almost seemed like it would overflow and spill out. As the saying goes, everyone has a weakness.

Shortly after Zhao Jie and Wei Luo left, Emperor Chong Zhen changed into a robe that was embroidered with dragons arranged in circular patterns and appeared at Zhao Yang Hall's entrance.

# Chapter 143.1

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Inside Zhao Yang Hall, there were only a few palace servants. They were wearing purple garments and tidying up the hall. As soon as they saw Emperor Chong Zhen entering the hall, they hurriedly saluted, “Greetings Your Majesty.”

Emperor Chong Zhen looked around the hall. Not seeing Empress Chen, his expression became more solemn as he asked, “Where’s the empress?”

One of the palace servants, Zi Zhu, said, “To respond to Your Majesty, the empress spoke to Princess Consort Jing for a while. She felt tired and she’s currently resting in the heated room.

Emperor Chong Zhen nodded. He looked at the food on the small, vermillion-lacquered arhat table and casually asked, “Has Princess Consort Jing left?”

Zi Zhu replied, “Yes, she recently left. Prince Jing personally came here for Princess Consort Jing.”

Emperor Chong Zhen didn’t ask any more questions. He walked towards the heated room, “This emperor is going to see the empress.”

Actually, it was slightly strange. For the past decade, Emperor Chong Zhen and Empress Chen’s relationship had been at a deadlock. Every time they met, they would most likely argue and part on bad terms. Even so, Emperor Chong Zhen would still come to Zhao Yang Hall once a month. None of the palace servants knew why.

Zhao Yang Hall’s palace servants were already used to their pattern of interacting with each other. This was why they weren’t surprised that Emperor Chong Zhen would still insist on going to see Empress Chen today even though she was already asleep.

After Emperor Chong Zhen passed through the *luo di zhao* that



was carved with joyful magpies, pushed open the doors, he looked towards the rosewood couch that was near a window and had decorative carvings. Empress Chen was lying down on the couch on her side. She was covered with a dark reddish purple blanket that was embroidered with dragons, phoenixes, and auspicious symbols. The precious hairpins and other hair accessories had been removed from her hair, so her silky black hair was piled up on the pillow. For no reason at all, it made him think of a phrase – hair as delicate and dense as clouds, neck as resplendent as jade.

Emperor Chong Zhen walked to the couch and looked at the woman lying down on it. He couldn't help sinking into contemplation.

He thought of the past, how they had fought together to conquer the world. She had been so bold and proud. Back then, she had seemed like an untamable little firecracker. If she wasn't happy with him, she would argue with him. Back then, he had told her that she was impossible to get along with. But in his heart, he would gladly endured any hardships for her and he was a glutton for punishment. No matter what she did, he could tolerate her little tantrums.

He remembered that there was one time when she had pulled her horse's reins and rode out of the camp when they couldn't come to an agreement. Even when night had fallen, she still didn't come back. At that time, it was a crucial juncture for the two armies. He was worried she had been kidnapped by their enemies and was in danger. He searched for her for the next two days like a headless chicken. He even risked the danger of going to the enemy camp to search for her.

Unexpectedly, she rushed out of the enemy camp on the third day with their enemy's severed head hanging on her horse. She proudly raised her chin and asked him, "Do you still think my plan isn't feasible?"

Even now, that scene still remained fresh in his memory. Her

back had been facing the sun and she looked like a blossoming rose that was burning. Her beauty had dazzled his eyes.

Later, he had torn off her wings with his hands. He had forced her to give up her freedom and she could no longer soar through the battlefields. She could only become a canary in his cage. He knew that even now, she still wanted to go back. All these years, she had resented him and didn't want to be close to him. And so, the distance between them only increased as they kept walking farther away from each other.

Emperor Chong Zhen sat down on the couch. He gently stroked Empress Chen's cheek with his fingers and quietly said, "Wan Wan..."

Empress Chen's name was Chen Ru Fu. Because she had been the youngest daughter in her family, her nickname was Wan Wan. Back when their relationship hadn't been at a standstill, he would call her "Wan Wan" and she would call him "Older brother Zhi Qing." But now, that was only a long ago memory.

Empress Chen always slept lightly. Emperor Chong Zhen had only sat down for a short period of time when she started to furrow her eyebrows and wake up. When she saw Emperor Chong Zhen, her first reaction was freezing in surprise. But, her expression quickly returned to normal, "Your Majesty, why did you come here? This consort had already fallen asleep."

Without changing his expression, Chong Zhen withdrew his hand and said, "This emperor came to see how you were doing. You recently said you weren't feeling well. Are you feeling better now?"

Empress Chen curved the corners of her lips. He didn't know if she was smiling because she felt moved by his words or if she wanted to laugh at him for acting superfluous.

"It wasn't anything serious. Ah Luo accompanied this consort for a while. This consort has already mostly recovered."

The emperor nodded. For a time, he didn't have anything else to say.

Empress Chen sat up, pushed her dense, dark hair behind her shoulders, and looked at the emperor. "This consort wants to go to sleep. If there's nothing else, this consort will have people send you back."

She was openly asking him to leave. Emperor Chong Zhen felt as if a stone was clogging his heart up. It wouldn't go up or down. He couldn't describe the feeling that he was experiencing. He saw that Empress Chen was already changing into her sleeping clothes and expressionlessly said, "This emperor will be sleeping here tonight."

Empress Chen paused in washing her face for a moment. Soon after, she calmly took the towel that Zi Zhu had brought. As she dried her face, she said, "The entire harem belongs to Your Majesty. You have the freedom to go wherever you want." Then, she ordered Zi Zhu, "Bring over His Majesty's sleeping clothes and serve His Majesty with washing up and changing clothes."

Zi Zhu acknowledged her order and left.

Today was the last day of the year. After today, it would be the beginning of a new year. Right after Emperor Chong Zhen changed his clothes, he heard the crackling sounds of firecrackers from outside the hall. It continued for the time it would take to steep a pot of tea. It seemed that it was already the New Year.

Empress Chen was standing by the bed. When she turned her head to look at him, there wasn't the slightest emotion in her eyes. A long time later, she finally faintly smiled and said, "It's New Year again. This consort has ordered people to cook dumplings filled with winter bamboo shoots. Your Majesty, you should try some."

Emperor Chong Zhen didn't move. He was still thinking of her recent expression. Why did she look at him as if she didn't have

any desire or expectations towards him and only had weariness left? Her indifference scared him witless.

After Emperor Chong Zhen ate the dumplings, he looked at Empress Chen again. He didn't see the expression from before.

The two of them respectively went to sleep without saying another word for the rest night.

## Chapter 143.2

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On the first day of the Lunar New Year, Wei Luo and Zhao Jie didn't go anywhere. It was bitterly cold outside. Wei Luo was wrapped in a fox fur cloak, holding a hand stove, and sitting on Zhao Jie's lap as she drowsily napped. Zhao Jie had one hand around her waist and his other hand was holding Meng Zi. He would occasionally flip a page.

(T/N: Meng Zi is a famous Confucianism book. It's a collection of anecdotes and conversations on topics in moral and political philosophy.)

Wei Luo suddenly heard a sweet, melodious sound. She curiously turned her head and saw that a box made of woven bamboo had been placed on the red sandalwood table with curved edges. The base of the box was very thick and the sound was coming from inside the box. There were even two vivid and lifelike skylarks perched on a branch inside the box. They chirped along with the music and their wings and eyes were also moving. Even the butterflies on the leaves also fluttered their wings. She could have almost been fooled into thinking they were real. Feeling very interested in this rare object, Wei Luo asked, "What's this?"

Seeing that she liked it, Zhao Jie smiled along with her and said, "It's a toy sent by the foreigners. It's called a musical box. It's for you."

Shortly after, the sound stopped and the skylarks also stopped moving. Wei Luo raised her head to request help from Zhao Jie. Zhao Jie turned the gear at the side of the box and the music started again.

Wei Luo stretched her hand out to touch the skylarks. "This is so interesting."

Zhao Jie stroked her head and said, "Many other objects were also added to the storeroom in addition to this item. If you like

them, you can have them all.”

Only a fool wouldn't accept gifts. Wei Luo naturally agreed. Soon after, she felt like there was something wrong. “Why are you giving me things without any reason?”

Zhao Jie smiled and he frankly asked, “Ah Luo, what happened to shoes you were going to make for me?”

Wei Luo only remembered this matter after he brought it up. She immediately jumped down from his lap and said, “Wait a second.”

When they were going to Tian Chan Mountain, she had brought along the half-finished shoes with her. There wasn't much to do at the hot springs villa, so Wei Luo had finished Zhao Jie's shoes before half a month had passed. But, she hadn't taken it out to show him since he wouldn't be able to wear it right now.

She walked to a cabinet that was decoratively carved, took out the shoes that were on the top shelf, and walked back to Zhao Jie's side. “I made them according to the shoe pattern you gave me. It should be the right size. You can try them on.”

Zhao Jie took the shoes and looked at them. The tops of the shoes were embroidered with a honeysuckle pattern. This style was a bit simple, but the stitches were finely done. A single glance showed that she had put forth a lot of effort to make this. Zhao Jie really liked the shoes, but he wasn't in a hurry to try them. He pulled Wei Luo's small hand over to carefully look at it. “How long did it take you to make this? Did you prick your hand while making them?”

Wei Luo cutely whined said, “Humph! You're asking this question now? This is my first time making shoes. It took me half a year and my fingertips have been poked to death. At the time, you were so busy with supervising the construction for the river channel that you weren't attentive towards me.”

Zhao Jie kissed her cheek and said in a distress tone, “I was

wrong. You only have to make this one pair of shoes. I can wear them for the rest of my life.”

Actually, he had done his best to take care of her. At that time, Zhao Jie has been constantly traveling back and forth between the villa and the city. Whenever he had time, he would accompany her. When her fingertips bleed, Zhao Jie was the one that sucked the blood away. She was only saying these words because she wanted credit for her achievement.

Zhao Jie tried on the shoes. The size was right. It was just a bit thin and couldn't be worn right now. They would be very suitable to wear once it was spring.

Zhao Jie said with a smile, “The shoes made by Ah Luo are more comfortable than the ones made by other people.”

Even though Wei Luo knew that he was only saying these words to make her happy, she still felt happy hearing them.

After lunch, Wei Luo thought of the two things she had asked him to do and asked about them.

Zhao Jie said, “I already had Zhu Geng send people to Guang Dong. If the horses are going as fast as possible, they'll be able to bring back Yang Zhen's news within a month.”

He paused before mentioning the other matter, “As for Liuli's poisoning, the palace servants from fifteen years ago have already been released from working in the palace. It'll require effort to find them and it'll probably take some time.”

Wei Luo asked, “Will you be able to find them?”

Zhao Jie said, “The palace keeps a register. It'll be possible to find them.”

Wei Luo let go of her worries.

On the next day, Wei Luo and Zhao Jie woke up early and prepared to go to Duke Ying's residence to visit her family.

Because Wei Luo had been late in coming back to the capital by half a month, she had missed Wei Chang Yin and Liang Yu Rong's wedding. Liang Yu Rong had already married into Duke Ying's household three days ago.



## Chapter 144

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Wei Luo felt regretful that she wasn't able to attend Liang Yu Rong and Wei Chang Yin's wedding. But when she thought about how the two of them didn't even have the opportunity to stay together in her past life, she decided that missing their wedding wasn't that regretful. Wei Luo believed that her oldest cousin Chang Yin would definitely treat Liang Yu Rong very well in their married life. After his leg was fully recovered, they would become a golden couple that would be envied by others.

Wei Luo selected a jade that was carved into the image of "Child-Sending Guanyin" from the storeroom. The jade felt moist and supple. In addition, the carving was exquisitely done. A single glance would show that it wasn't a common item.

(T/N: Guanyin is commonly known as the goddess of mercy, but she's also the patron saint of mothers. This image of "Child-Sending Guanyin" is associated with blessing parents with filial children.)

She asked Zhao Jie about the item. As expected, it was a priceless treasure that had been passed down from one generation to the next. A Buddhist monk, Great Master Han Kong, had created this in the previous dynasty. Wei Luo was already used to his prodigal behavior, so she calmly said she understood. She also selected several presents to give to her grandparents, father, and aunts.

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They were able to arrive at Duke Ying's residence before 9AM.

Wei Luo and Zhao Jie walked into the receiving room. Wei Luo was immediately able to see Liang Yu Rong standing behind Wei Chang Yin. Wei Chang Yin was still sitting in his beech wheelchair. Actually, he was already able to start walking. He just couldn't walk for too long. He would walk for an hour every day to recuperate his legs and feet.

Liang Yu Rong was wearing a pomegranate red jacket that was embroidered with a silk treasure pattern and a white, pleated skirt embroidered with auspicious symbols. She looked as lovely as flowers. Her smiling face showed dimples on the bottom of her soft cheeks. She originally had her head lowered to speak with Wei Chang Yin. After she heard a servant girl announcing that Wei Luo had entered the room, she lifted her head. Her face turned red after she directly looked at Wei Luo's bright eyes.

Wei Luo and Zhao Jie greeted the older generation first and presented their gifts. When it was Liang Yu Rong's turn, Wei Luo took a long, red sandalwood box that was carved with a pattern of daffodils from Jin Lu. She teasingly said, "This is for oldest cousin Chang Yin and older sister-in-law Yu Rong."

Liang Yu Rong took the box and opened it to see. There was a jade figurine of Guanyin. She blushed and wanted to have a few words with Wei Luo. But since she was a newly married wife, it wouldn't be good for her to act discourteously in front of the elders. She only stealthily sent Wei Luo a rebuking glance before saying, "Thank you... fifth sister-in-law."

Wei Luo said, "Your welcome."

On the side, Second Madam Song-shi saw the item and said with a smile, "Yu Rong and First Young Master have only been married for a few days, there isn't any rush. But, Ah Luo, you've been married to Prince Jing for two months. Is there any movement in your stomach?"

Wei Luo didn't expect that the topic would shift towards her. She immediately felt embarrassed. She usually didn't think about this issue. She felt that was plenty of time and there was no need to be anxious. It would be best to let nature take its course. Now that second aunt was asking this question in front of everyone, she paused for a while, "I..."

Zhao Jie held her hand and said, "Ah Luo is still young. It might

be harmful for her body to have a child right now. This prince isn't anxious for an heir. Let's talk about this later."

Second madam awkwardly smiled. It wouldn't be good for her to continue asking questions.

Wei Luo looked around. Not seeing Wei Chang Hong, she asked Wei Kun, "Daddy, why isn't Chang Hong here?"

Wei Kun said, "Chang Hong is writing rhyming couplets in the inner court. I already ordered people to call him over here."

Wei Luo said, "I'll go over there to look. I haven't walked around the residence for a while."

Wei Kun didn't say anything to stop her.

Zhao Jie knew about this younger brother's tendencies. He didn't know what Chang Hong would say to Wei Luo when they met, so he lifted his lip and said to Wei Kun and Duke Ying, "This prince will also go to look at younger brother-in-law's rhyming couplets."

As a result, Duke Ying and Wei Kun naturally couldn't stay in the receiving room. They undoubtedly had to follow Zhao Jie to the inner court.

Duke Ying's household had a habit of writing their own rhyming couplets for the New Year. This year was Wei Chang Hong and Wei Chang Xian's turn. However, Wei Chang Xian was a hyperactive person that couldn't sit still. He had only written a few verses before slipping away to play somewhere else and left Wei Chang Hong behind in the inner court to write the rhyming couplets at a remarkable speed.

(T/N: Just in case it was too long ago, Wei Chang Xian is Qin-shi's son.)

Underneath an osmanthus tree, Wei Chang Hong was sitting at a black desk that was outlined in gold and had curved edges. There was more than a dozen written rhyming couplets by his hand. He looked very serious and meticulous. The movement of his hand as

he was writing seemed as natural as moving clouds and flowing water. It was a very pleasing sight to observe.

At his side, there was a servant girl grinding ink for him. She was so absorbed with watching him that she didn't even notice when the group of people had come over.

The young servant girl couldn't be blamed for being starstruck. After the New Year has passed, Chang Hong was fifteen years old and the age when teenagers were growing up. His thin body had become tall and straight and his face was gradually changing into a man's face. He was good-looking to begin with. As he became more mature, young noble women were even more attracted to him, much less a young servant girl.

The servant girl glimpsed from her peripheral vision that the important people in the household had come here. She hurriedly saluted and said, "This servant greets Duke Ying and the other masters."

Wei Chang Hong put down his brush, stood up, and said, "Paternal grandfather, father..." His line of sight shifted and he saw Wei Luo behind them. He couldn't resist showing happiness. He said with a smile, "Ah Luo, you're also here?"

Wei Luo walked to his side and looked down at the rhyming couplets he had written before she raised her head and said, "It's your fault for not coming to see me in the receiving room. I could only come here to look for you."

Wei Chang Hong said, "I wanted to finish writing the fifty rhyming couplets before going to the receiving room. I didn't expect that you would come here."

Duke Ying saw that he was the only person here and asked, "Where's Chang Xian?"

Wei Chang Hong said, "Third cousin's friend came here to look for him. He had something to do, so he left the residence first."

Duke Ying shook his head. He was very displeased as he said, "That child is already twenty years old and he still gets impatient."

Wei Chang Hong didn't say anything.

Duke Ying and the other masters picked up the rhyming couplets that Chang Hong had written and were very pleased with these poems. Duke Ying commented, "The brushstrokes are elegant and outstanding. The calligraphy is strong and powerful."

The family joyously and harmoniously talked for a while.

Duke Ying was worried about slighting Zhao Jie, so he suggested going back to the receiving room to sit down. Just as they were about to walk back, a little fellow wearing a crimson robe animatedly rushed over here from the other end of the verandah. He ran straight into Wei Luo, held her arm, and said, "Older sister Ah Luo, you finally came back. I missed you so much."

This little fellow was no other than Wei Chang Mi.

The servant girl behind him hurriedly stepped forward to say, "Duke and Madam, please forgive me. Seventh Young Master insisted on coming here..."

Fourth madam didn't blame her. She waved her head and said, "You can withdraw."

Qin-shi didn't expect that Wei Chang Mi would continue to stickily stay by Wei Luo's side.

He raised his small face and asked, "Older sister Ah Luo, will you still be leaving after coming back this time?"

Wei Luo nodded, "Of course, I'll be leaving in the evening."

Wei Chang Mi pouted and disappointedly blinked his eyes. "Can't you stay for a few extra days? We haven't been able to play together after you got married."

Fourth madam helplessly reprimanded him, "Mi-er, come here. Don't say nonsense."

Wei Chang Mi held Wei Luo's arm and didn't move. His slippery dark eyes turned and he looked at the silent person next to Wei Luo. Although he was only ten years old, he understood the meaning of marriage and knew that Zhao Jie was the person that Wei Luo had married. After thinking, he obediently called out, "Older brother-in-law, are you well?"

Zhao Jie curved his lips, "En."

Although this little fellow was sticky, he was much more sensible than Wei Chang Hong. At the very least, he had never heard Wei Chang Hong called him, "Older brother-in-law."

Zhao Jie rather benevolently said, "The next time you miss older sister Ah Luo, you can come over to Prince Jing's residence at any time."

Wei Chang Mi's eyes brightened and he repeatedly nodded, "Thank you, older brother-in-law."

On the side, Wei Chang Hong glanced at Chang Mi and thought he was such a suck-up.

## Chapter 145.1

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After the family ate lunch, Wei Luo went with fourth madam to the reception pavilion to talk for a while, then she went to first branch's Banyan Tree Courtyard with Liang Yu Rong. There were still leftover bright red paper cutouts of the "double happiness" from the wedding day. The lanterns in the verandah also hadn't been taken down yet.

When they entered the bridal chamber, Wei Luo saw shining, red candles that were decorated with a dragon and a phoenix on a long, narrow table. Next to the candles, there was a golden tray filled with peanuts, red dates, lotus seeds, and other items. Wei Luo smiled as she looked at Liang Yu Rong and asked, "Can I go inside to look?"

In a slightly bad mood, Liang Yu Rong cast her an annoyed look and asked her a question in response, "If you want to look, can I stop you?"

Wei Luo pursed her lips and laughed. She grandiosely walked into the inner room. The inner room had a twelve piece red sandalwood divider that was decoratively carved with lotus flowers. Behind the divider, there was all of the furniture that the newlyweds would need.

Wei Luo looked around with keen interest as if she wasn't already married herself. She walked to the bedside and pointed at the pair of crimson pillows that were embroidered with a pair of mandarin ducks. She asked, "Yu Rong, did you embroidered this yourself?"

Liang Yu Rong nodded. She proudly said, "In addition to the pillows, the quilt and bed sheet were also embroidered by me."

Wei Luo blinked and asked with a smile, "I remember that your embroidery skills weren't very good. Why did you embroider so much?"

The tips of Liang Yu Rong's ears turned red. Without saying a word, she led Wei Luo to sit down on a couch by the window and pretended that she didn't hear her question.

Wei Luo supported her cheeks in her hands and wouldn't let her off. She smilingly asked, "Yu Rong, how was your wedding night with oldest cousin?"

Liang Yu Rong took an orange and stuffed it into Wei Luo's hand. Angry out of embarrassment, she said, "Eat an orange. Why are you asking so many questions today?"

Liang Yu Rong wasn't a person that was easily embarrassed, but her young girl's heart had been fully appeared after she had recently married the person she loved. Her shy and embarrassed appearance made her looked much cuter than normal. No wonder Wei Luo couldn't resist teasing her.

After Wei Luo mentioned it, Liang Yu Rong couldn't help thinking about her wedding night with Wei Chang Yin. She had always thought that Wei Chang Yin was an elegant and noble person that had didn't have any earthly desires. Unexpectedly, even he had moments when he couldn't restrain his emotions...

That night, it had been the first time for the both of them. There were bound to be mishaps. Since Wei Chang Ying's leg wasn't fully recovered, he guided her to complete the wedding night with his words. As his quiet and hoarse voice entered her ears, Liang Yu Rong felt as if her brains were turning into a tangled mess. She couldn't think of anything. She even forgot about the booklet that her mother had given her the night before the wedding. She could only follow Wei Chang Yin's words. Whatever words he said, she obediently did them.

On the first attempt, it went to the wrong place. Liang Yu Rong felt so pained that tears came rolling down her eyes. She curled up against Wei Chang Yin's chest and cried out, "It hurts."

Wei Chang Yin wrapped his arms around her shoulders. This was



the first time that he realized this girl was so slim and frail. Feeling heartache, he kissed her forehead, "I'm sorry..." But, he didn't say he wanted to stop.

All women had to experience this. Since she had married him, he wanted to give her everything a wife would have. He didn't want other people to think badly of her. His leg was his only injured part. The other parts were perfectly fine.

When Liang Yu Rong went to greet her father-in-law and mother-in-law the next day, her sore legs felt completely lacking in strength and she even felt embarrassed every time she looked at Wei Chang Yin.

Two days later, she gradually became more comfortable.

Wei Luo peeled the orange. As her teeth bit down into the orange, sweet and fresh juice burst out. She curiously asked, "It's not the season for oranges, why are these oranges so sweet?"

Liang Yu Rong explained, "Big brother Chang Yin knows that I like to eat oranges, so he especially had people deliver these oranges from the south." After saying this, she saw Wei Luo's suddenly enlightened gaze. She poked Wei Luo's forehead and said, "You couldn't possibly be feeling jealous over this, right? Don't think that I don't know. Your Prince Jing treats you so well. If you want to eat oranges, he might actually buy all of the orchards for you."

Wei Luo clutched her forehead, laughed, and confidently admitted, "That's true."

As two girls that had recently married, they had endless topics to talk about. After chattering for an hour, they heard noise from the outside courtyard. Liang Yu Rong tilted her head and looked out through the window. Wei Chang Yin was standing up from his wheelchair and toddling around the courtyard with the help of a cane. Liang Yu Rong immediately put down the items she was holding, jumped up from the arhat couch, and said, "Ah Luo, I'm

going over there to look. Wait here for bit.”

Right after Wei Luo said, “Okay,” Liang Yu Rong disappeared like a wisp of smoke.

## Chapter 145.2

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Wei Chang Yin hadn't been able to walk since he was eight years old after a horse had stepped on his leg and injured his bones and muscles. It had already been over ten years since that accident. Not only did his wounds have to heal, he also had to learn how to walk again. Fortunately, the servants had been massaging Wei Chang Yin's leg every day and the muscular dystrophy hadn't been significant. So, it wasn't too difficult for him to practice walking.

Wei Luo saw Liang Yu Rong walk to Wei Chang Yin's side and say a few words to him. But, he shook his head in refusal.

Wei Chang Yin said, "You don't need to help me. You just have to stand in front of me. I'll walk towards you."

Liang Yu Rong couldn't let go her worries and asked, "What if you fall down?"

Wei Chang Yin smiled and stretched his hand out to stroke her head, "You'll be standing in front of me."

Liang Yu Rong bit her bottom lip. That was true. If he started to fall, she would definitely rush forward to help him. As a result, she reluctantly agreed to his idea.

Liang Yu Rong stood ten steps away from Wei Chang Yin. As Wei Chang Yin went one step forward, she would take one step back. She slowly guided him forward. After they had walked for about fifteen minutes, Liang Yu Rong was worried that Wei Chang Yin would be tired. So, she stopped underneath a plum tree. She wanted to let him rest for a bit. "Big brother Chang Yin, let's rest for a bit after you reach here. I feel a bit tired."

He knew that she had said she was the one feeling tired instead of saying it was him because she was worried about hurting his self-esteem. Wei Chang Yin lowered his head and chuckled. He actually wasn't a sensitive person, but he felt very comforted by Liang Yu

Rong's attentiveness. He said, "Okay."

Wei Chang Yin slowly walked the remaining the steps. His leg wasn't fully recovered and his calf would tremble with each step. He had only walked for a brief period of time, but his forehead was covered in sweat. However, there wasn't the slightest sign of pain on his face. He still had usual carefree and light-hearted expression. If Liang Yu Rong didn't clearly know about his condition, she would have thought he was feeling relaxed.

Just as he was about to reach her side, he suddenly stopped walking, flung the cane to the ground, and opened his arms towards Liang Yu Rong. He said with a faint smile, "I can't walk anymore. Yu Rong, come and help me."

Without saying a word, Liang Yu Rong rushed forward. She wrapped her arm around his waist and said, "Didn't you say you could walk by yourself? You wouldn't agree to letting me help you."

Wei Chang Yin smiled and didn't say a word. Actually, there were only two steps left. He could have finished walking forward. It was only that he suddenly wanted to hug her.

Liang Yu Rong absolutely didn't know his true thoughts. She ordered a servant to push the wheelchair over and helped him sit down in the wheelchair. She asked, "Big brother Chang Yin, are you tired? I'll push you back to our room to rest."

Wei Chang Yin said, "I'll just rest underneath the tree. I still want to walk a little bit more later." He looked towards the room, "Is Ah Luo inside? Go inside and keep her company."

Liang Yu Rong finally remembered that Ah Luo was still in the room. She hastily went back to the room and said, "Ah Luo, sorry to keep you waiting..."

A servant girl wearing a pink jacket and skirt stepped forward and said, "First Young Madam, Princess Consort Jing has already

left.”

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Wei Luo was a person with a high level of discernment. Liang Yu Rong and Wei Chang Yin were in their honeymoon period where they were stuck together like glue. It wouldn't be good for her to forcibly break them apart.

After leaving Banyan Tree Courtyard, on the path to the main room, she saw two people standing in the verandah. It was a man and a woman. The man was Wei Chang Hong. The woman was wearing a peach colored jacket with a pattern of flowering branches. From her style of dress, she was this household's servant. Wei Luo couldn't hear what the servant girl was saying to Wei Chang Hong. She saw him furrowing his eyebrows and looking very serious. After he reprimanded the servant girl, the servant girl lowered her head in shame and ran away.

By an unlucky coincidence, she ran past Wei Luo.

Wei Luo clearly saw her face. She was one of the fourth madam's servant girls, Rui Zhu.

Wei Luo walked over to Wei Chang Hong and asked, “Chang Hong, what are you doing here? What happened with that servant girl?”

Wei Chang Hong said, “That servant girl tripped and I happened to catch her, so she wanted to give me a handkerchief.” When he said up to this point, he was already very clear about her intentions. He faintly furrowed his eyebrows and said, “I didn't accept it and told her stay within the boundaries of her position.”

Wei Luo hadn't expected that fourth aunt would have a servant girl like this. Wei Luo wasn't happy. Wei Chang Hong was definitely outstanding, but not just anyone could cling to him as a way to improve their social standing. That servant girl's courage wasn't small. She dared to focus her attentions on a younger

master from a duke family. She said, "I'll tell fourth aunt about this matter, so don't concern yourself with this matter. If something like this happens again, handle it the same way as today."

Wei Chang Hong nodded and walked with her towards the main room.

Wei Luo suddenly thought of something important. She turned her head and asked, "Chang Hong, has daddy started looking for a marriage partner for you?"

Wei Chang Hong's footstep froze for a moment, but he quickly caught up to her, "He has."

Wei Luo asked with great interest, "Do you know which families he's look at? Did he bring you over to look?" She stopped at the verandah outside of the main room and grabbed Chang Hong's sleeve, "Do you have a girl that you like?"

Wei Chang Hong also stopped walking. After thinking for a while, he finally said, "Fourth aunt looked at the girls from Marquis An Ling's household for me." He looked at Wei Luo before saying, "I didn't like them, so I asked father to refuse."

Wei Luo asked, "Why? Are the girls from that family not good?"

Wei Chang Hong said, "It's not that. I just don't want to marry them."

Perhaps, it wasn't meant to be. Wei Luo knew that this matter couldn't be rushed or forced, so she was very open-minded. "Then tell me, what type of girl do you like?"

Wei Chang Hong didn't immediately reply. He gaze shifted to look at something behind Wei Luo. When he looked at Wei Luo again, there was a hint of a smile in his eyes, "Naturally, it's someone that's similar to Ah Luo."

Wei Luo didn't notice his strangeness and only thought he was joking. She didn't take his words seriously at all.

However, as soon as she turned, she saw that Zhao Jie was standing at the doorway. There was a smile at the corner of his mouth as he asked word by word, “Ah Luo, where did you go?”

【Little Theater】

Baby Jing asks for help: “As expected, younger brother-in-law is provoking me. What should I do? I’m anxiously waiting for answer.”

Offered solution: Beat him to death.

## Chapter 146.1

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After returning to the reception pavilion, Wei Luo told Fourth Madam Qin-shi about Rui Zhu's attempt at seducing Wei Chang Hong and also said, "Fourth aunt, I know that you're a kind-hearted and lenient person and that you rarely punish or chastise the servants. But, this servant girl dared to have intentions towards a young master. If you don't control them, I'm worried that they'll lead Chang Hong astray."

Hearing these words, Qin-shi also paid attention to this issue. Although the matriarch might occasionally give bed servants to a young master, this wasn't the same as a servant girl trying to seduce a young master of her own initiative. If the servant girls didn't know their place and tried to climb the social ranks as they wished, this would cause the household to be a complete mess. Qin-shi said, "Tell Rui Zhu to come here."

The head servant girl at Qin-shi's side left and soon came back with Rui Zhu.

When Rui Zhu saw that Wei Luo was also here, she understood what was happening. She kneeled down and confessed everything without Qin-shi interrogating her.

Qin-shi wasn't merciful. She had a servant beat her with a plank ten times, then she sent her away. Her punishment would also serve as warning to the other servants.

Wei Luo and Zhao Jie didn't stay at Duke Ying's residence for long. They left before the evening.

On the way back home, Zhao Jie didn't say a word from beginning to end. He was sitting across from Wei Luo with his eyes half closed and his arms crossed against his chest. Wei Luo couldn't figure out his mood from his expression. From time to time, Wei Luo would glance at him, but he didn't show any reaction.



Wei Luo couldn't help thinking about the words that Chang Hong had said in front of the main room's entrance. Chang Hong hadn't like Zhao Jie from the very beginning. He had most likely said those words to provoke Zhao Jie in an attempt to make his heart feel stifled. However, Zhao Jie seemed to take Chang Hong's words seriously. Zhao Jie's eyes had been as cold as ice and could make a person feel like they would freeze to death.

Right now, Zhao Jie was staying silent and Wei Luo considered whether or not she should explain that Chang Hong wasn't serious. Just as she was about to speak, Zhao Jie said, "Is Wei Chang Hong's engaged yet?"

Wei Luo shook her head. But, after seeing that his eyes were closed, she cleared her throat and said, "Not yet."

Zhao Jie slowly opened his and saw that the young girl in front of him was sitting properly and neatly. Then, he thought of the words that Wei Chang Hong had recently said and felt displeased. He patted the spot next to him and said Wei Luo, "Come here." After Wei Luo moved over here, he brought her onto his lap, patted her butt, and said, "The sooner that he gets engaged the better."

This way Wei Chang Hong won't spend every day thinking about his wife. Even if they were siblings, a younger brother shouldn't watch his older sister this closely. So what if they were fraternal twins, they still had to get married after growing up. Zhao Jie embraced the lovable girl in his arms, then he firmly slapped Wei Luo's little butt.

Wei Luo discontentedly wiggled her body in protest. "Why are you hitting me? Chang Hong was only joking. Why are you taking his words so seriously?" She wrapped her arms around Zhao Jie's neck and directly looked into his eyes as she said, "My daddy has already started looking for a marriage partner for Chang Hong. Perhaps, he just hasn't met a suitable person and that's why things have been delayed. Big brother, you know a lot of people. Do you

know of any families with daughters of an appropriate age? How about you pay attention for potential candidates for Chang Hong?"

Zhao Jie closed his eyes and refused without thinking, "I don't have time."

So petty. Wei Luo stayed in Zhao Jie's embrace, but she felt fed up. His last slap had really been too vicious. It hurt even now. He had lived in the army camps for too long and his strength was too strong. Didn't he know that he should control his strength?

Zhao Jie felt her ramrod straight posture and saw the indignant expression on her little face. He pinched her cheeks and asked, "Are you angry?"

Wei Luo burrowed her head into the space between his neck and shoulder and rubbed back and forth. She used one hand to place his hand on her bottom, "It hurts... Rub this spot for me."

Zhao Jie chuckled. He naturally didn't refused. As he happily rubbed that spot for her, he asked, "Did I hit you too hard?"

Wei Luo didn't say anything. But, the answer was self-evident. Weren't these words superfluous?

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A short while later, Wei Luo suddenly remembered something, lifted the curtain and told the driver to turn around.

Zhao Jie asked, "What's wrong?"

Wei Luo said in a serious tone, "It's going to be spring soon. I want to go to a fabric store to see if there's any new cloth for sale. I want to buy some fabric and make spring clothing with them."

It wasn't necessary for her to personally go there herself. If Wei Luo wanted to look, she could have a storekeeper personally deliver a selection of samples to their home. But, Wei Luo felt that this wouldn't be complete. It would be more convenient if she went to the store directly to see. Moreover, they were already

outside and she had Zhao Jie to accompany her. She could treat this as a way to relax and pass the time.

Zhao Jie knew that she liked to shamelessly show off her good looks and always wanted the best looking items, so he didn't say anything.

Wei Luo asked, "Big brother, how were you able to get Xiu Chun's people to agree to make my wedding dress?"

Zhao Jie recollected his memories for a moment and leisurely said, "I offered twenty times the regular price."

Wei Luo, "..."

Humans will die for riches, just like birds will die for food. Fine, she understood this principle.

Today was Xiu Chun's opening business day. There were already people waiting in line to buy their ready-made clothing. In addition to ready-made clothing, Xiu Chun also sold fabric that they had woven and dyed. Unfortunately, there was only a limited supply. Usually the fabric would be sold out within half a day.

When Prince Jing's carriage passed by Xiu Chun, Wei Luo wanted to leave the carriage to look.

Zhao Jie saw the sea of people at the entrance and had Zhu Geng entered the store first. A short while later, Xiu Chun's female shopkeeper personally came out to greet them. The female shopkeeper led them to the second floor. This floor was completely separated from the first floor and had fabrics with the most beautiful colors and most exquisite patterns. The spring clothes made from these fabrics would undoubtedly be extremely beautiful.

Wei Luo steeped forward to touch the soft and smooth fabric. When she touched the fabric, it felt as if she was grasping water that would silently slip away from her fingers. No wonder there were so many noble women that scrambled after Xiu Chun's

clothing. Not only was the clothing beautiful, it was also very comfortable to wear. Even if a person wanted to dislike their clothing, it would be difficult.

## Chapter 146.2

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After Wei Luo had selected several bolts of fabric, the female shopkeeper asked, “We still have the princess consort’s measurement from last time. Would Your Highness like us to make clothes using those measurements?”

Wei Luo was slightly surprised, “Doesn’t your store only accept five custom orders?”

The female steward gratifyingly smiled, “The princess consort is different from other people.”

Xiu Chun made very unique clothing. Every time a new style of robe was made, it would become the trend in the capital for a while. Many stores tried to imitate Xiu Chun, but they were never able to successfully copy its original style.

Since the storekeeper had asked, Wei Luo naturally agreed.

The female storekeeper said, “Once the clothes are made, I’ll have them deliver to Prince Jing’s residence.”

Wei Luo nodded and saw Zhu Geng following the female storekeeper through the inner wall partition. He was probably going there to pay the bill. As Wei Luo and Zhao Jie walked out of Xiu Chun, Wei Luo jokingly asked, “Big brother, how much money did you offer this time?”

Zhao Jie said, “I bought this store last year. You can have as many clothes made here as you want.”

Wei Luo opened and closed her mouth. This was the first time she felt that there was truly an advantage to marrying a prince.

After leaving Xiu Chun, just as Wei Luo was about to enter the carriage, she saw a familiar figure from her peripheral vision.

As Gao Qing Yang was walking out of Xiu Chun’s entrance, she saw a young beggar girl with shabby clothing. She tilted her head

and ordered the servant girl at her side.

Wei Luo saw the servant girl nodding, walking to a nearby dumpling stall to buy two dumplings, and placing the dumplings in front of the young girl. Without waiting for the beggar girl to thank her, the servant girl walked back to Gao Qing Yang's side. Gao Qing Yang looked away from the beggar girl and without any changes in her expression, she turned around to go into her family's carriage.

When her line of sight shifted, she met Wei Luo's smiling eyes.

Gao Qing Yang froze for a moment. She hadn't expected to meet Wei Luo here. She also lightly smiled in greeting. Then, she went inside Duke Zhen's residence's carriage.

Wei Luo currently had a favorable impression of Gao Qing Yang even though they didn't have pleasant interactions with each other as children. She hadn't expected that her temperament would change so much. Last time, not only had she helped her win that game, she had also stopped Li Xiang from slapping her that one time. She was truly a dependable person.

Was she already engaged?

Zhao Jie pulled Wei Luo inside the carriage, poked her forehead, and asked, "What are you thinking about?"

Wei Luo smiled and mysteriously said, "Not telling you."

Zhao Jie placed his hand on her small bottom and slightly closed his eyes. "Are you going to tell me or not?"

Wei Luo was really scared about being spanked. Even if he used less strength, it would still hurt. She jumped out from his arms, sat down across from him, and said, "I recently saw Duke Zhen's family's Miss Gao. Aren't you her cousin? What kind of impression do you have of her?"

Zhao Jie thought for a moment before saying, "Gao Qing Yang?"

Wei Luo nodded, "Yes."

Zhao Jie considered for a moment. He didn't pay much attention to other girls and had only spoken to Gao Qing Yang a handful of times, so he didn't have any impression of her. He halfheartedly said, "I heard imperial mother say that she has a quiet and steady temperament."

Wei Luo thought about his words and very quickly let go of her original idea. Chang Hong was a habitually silent person and Gao Qing Yang was also a quiet person. If the two of them were paired together, neither of them would say anything. It seemed that they weren't suitable for each other. She shouldn't think about this idea anymore.

During the next few days, Wei Luo and Zhao Jie continued going to their older relatives' homes one after another and received many red envelopes.

The days peacefully passed by and the temperature gradually became warmer day by day and wasn't as cold as before.

Today, the villa on Tian Chan Mountain delivered freshly picked cherries. Jin Lu washed some and brought a small plate of the cherries to the study. Wei Luo ate the cherry dessert while lying down on the couch that was by the window and reading a book with interesting stories.

On the side, Zhao Jie was handling official work and would occasionally glance over at Wei Luo. She was eagerly reading her stories and not paying him the slightest attention.

Zhao Jie put down his brush and rubbed the spot between his eyebrows. Just as he was about to call Wei Luo over, he saw Zhu Geng coming inside with a solemn expression.

Zhu Geng said, "Your Highness, this subordinate has news regarding the matter that you had previously ordered an investigation on."

Wei Luo had sharp ears and naturally heard these words. She immediately put down the cherry she was holding and turned her head to look.

Zhao Jie said, “Speak.”

Zhu Geng said, “This subordinate has found a dismissed female servant that served Noble Consort Ning fifteen years ago.”



# Chapter 147.1

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Zhao Jie put down the book he was holding and asked, “Where is she?”

Zhu Geng reverently and respectfully replied, “To respond to Your Highness, she’s already been settled down in a place outside the capital.”

Only seven or eight days had passed since Zhao Jie’s order, his subordinates really worked very quickly.

Sitting in his rosewood, round-backed chair, Zhao Jie contemplated for a while before saying, “Bring her here immediately.”

Zhu Geng acknowledged the order and left the room.

Wei Luo put down her novel and sat up on the couch. Her dark, limpid eyes looked at Zhao Jie. She wanted to say something to comfort Zhao Jie, but she didn’t know where to start. Seeing Zhao Jie walking towards here, she stretched her hands out and requested, “Pick me up. I want a hug.”

Zhao Jie grasped Wei Luo’s hands and wrapped them around his neck, supported Wei Luo’s bottom with his hand, and picked her up from the couch. But, he didn’t sit down on the couch. Instead, he walked to the other side. Wei Luo clung to his body like she was a koala bear and moved up until her eyes were directly facing his. She asked, “Big brother?”

Zhao Jie looked at her and uttered a quiet sound of acknowledgment.

Wei Luo opened and closed her mouth. She wanted to ask something, but Zhao Jie’s eyes that were as deep as the sea silenced her. She kissed Zhao Jie’s lips and changed what she had originally planned to ask, “Her Majesty likes to go to Bao He Hall to pray to Buddha. I went with her one time. There weren’t many palace

servants there. I only wanted a cup of water and I still had to wait for a long time. You should send more people over there, so that they'll be able to properly attend to the empress."

Zhao Jie smiled, "A Buddha Hall is suppose to be peaceful and quiet place. Imperial mother dismissed most of the palace servants from there because she doesn't like to be bothered when she's chanting sutras."

Wei Luo's heart tightened and she couldn't resist furrowing her eyebrows. Fortunately, her cheek was against Zhao Jie's face, so he couldn't see her expression. "Then, you should secretly send guards to watch over her. It's better to be prepared just in case."

Zhao Jie didn't refuse her this time. He compromised by saying, "I'll arrange this tomorrow." Then, he pinched her butt as he asked, "Are you satisfied?"

Wei Luo nodded, but she didn't explain why she was being so insistent about her request.

She was worried because Empress Chen had died in Bao He Hall in her past life. Wei Luo didn't know the details. She had only heard other people saying that when Empress Chen went there to burn incense in worship, the canopy in the hall had caught on fire from the three hundred and thirty lit candles. This was how her life had ended. At the time, there wasn't a single palace servant inside the hall. Even if there had been servants in the hall to begin with, Empress Chen had dismissed them. By the time that Emperor Chong Zhen had led people over there and the fire was extinguished, not even her corpse was left behind for the emperor. Everything had turned into ashes.

This matter had always stayed in Wei Luo's heart. However, she didn't know if the rumors she had heard were true or false, so she didn't want to prematurely mention this. It was only now that Empress Chen had been going to Bao He Hall more and more frequently. In addition, there was a valuable, solemn Buddha

statue in Bao He Hall. This was why Wei Luo couldn't resist thinking about what had happen in her previous life.

That incident should be happening around this time.

Wei Luo didn't want Empress Chen to die like this. It wasn't just because she was her mother-in-law. It was also because of Empress Chen's character. Wei Luo had like Empress Chen since she was a child. She felt that Empress Chen was a woman that could be compared favorably with men in terms of ability and bravery. She shouldn't have died so early or give Noble Consort Ning and her son this unfair advantage. She should be there watch as Zhao Jie was crowned emperor.

Zhao Jie walked back and forth in the study while holding Wei Luo. His steps were very steady and his arms were also very stable as he held her. It was only that his posture was slightly strange. He held Wei Luo as if he carrying a child.

Zhao Jie suddenly thought of something. He lowered his head and said into Wei Luo's ear, "Let's try this position next time."

Wei Luo's face turned red. She naturally knew what he was implying. She incredulously asked, "H-How is this possible?"

Zhao Jie raised eyebrow, "Why wouldn't it be possible?"

At this time, how could he still be thinking about that? Wei Luo was glad that there was no one in the study right now. She mumbled to herself, "Too strange. I don't want to."

Zhao Jie placed her down on the black-lacquered table that was decoratively carved with clouds, stroked her head, and said with a smile, "Silly girl, it'll be interesting to try new things."

Wei Luo shook her head like rattle drum. She wouldn't agree no matter what.

Zhao Jie lowered his head to bite her ear and quietly said, "Didn't you beg me to help you find out about Yang Zhen's situation? How are you going to repay me?"

Wei Luo was seething in anger. She pushed him away and glowered at him. "Why does it count as me begging? Yang Zhen belongs to Liuli..." She paused for moment. When she looked at Zhao Jie again, he looked as if he was definitely going to eat her.

Oh, right. Even though Yang Zhen was Liuli's sweetheart, Liuli had asked her for help and she had asked Zhao Jie for help in turn. It wasn't wrong for him to say this. Wei Luo gave up. She blew out her cheeks, pinched the skin around Zhao Jie's waist, and said, "Don't act too outrageous."

Unfortunately, the flesh there was very hard. No matter how hard she tried to pinch and twist his waist, she didn't succeed. It was even less likely for her to be able to successfully hurt him.

Zhao Jie deliberately misinterpreted her meaning. He smiled and said, "En, I'll be more gentle."

What was the result of these vulgar words being said during the daytime? When Zhu Geng came back, he saw Wei Luo sitting at the corner of the couch with a red face and his master was composedly sitting at his desk while holding a book. There was a faint smile on Zhao Jie's lips. His posture was remarkably similar to the posture of someone that had recently finished bullying an innocent girl.

Zhu Geng coughed once and pretended that he didn't know anything. With his head lowered, he said, "Your Highness, Chang Mama has been brought to the residence."

## Chapter 147.2

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Zhao Jie put down his book. By the time he stood up, he had resumed his normal, cold and aristocratic appearance. He said, “Tell this prince about her situation.”

As Zhu Geng led Zhao Jie and Wei Luo to the receiving room, he complied with Zhao Jie’s order by narrating Chang Mama’s story.

Chang Mama had once been Noble Consort Ning’s highly valued personal servant girl that she had brought with her into the palace. However, she had been suddenly released from her duties fifteen years ago when she was only twenty-two years old, before reaching the age when palace servants would normally be released from their service. The matter had been arranged under very suspicious circumstances. She had disappeared overnight as if she had never existed. As of now, Chang Mama had already married and had two children. Her husband was an official and her life was pretty good.

Other than Chang Mama, two other servant girls had also been released from the palace. However, their hometowns were too remote and they haven’t been found yet.

When they arrived at the receiving room, there was a woman wearing a light purple bi jia kneeling at the center of the room. Although she was only in her late thirties, her hair was entirely grey and her face was lined with wrinkles. She seemed more like an old woman that was in her fifties or sixties.

Zhao Jie and Wei Luo sat down on the chairs that were decoratively carved with hornless dragons outlined in gold. Zhao Jie looked at the woman on the ground and said, “Raise your head.”

Chang Mama cowered for a moment before she slowly lifted her head to look at them.

When she came here, she already knew the reason. In the past

years, she had lived her days in fear and had already foreseen that this day would come. Lacking confidence, she quietly said, “This subject greets Your Highnesses Prince Jing and Princess Consort Jing.”

Zhao Jie said, “Do you know why this prince has asked you to come here?”

Chang-shi didn’t pretend to be stupid. After all, her entire family’s lives, including her recently born grandson that wasn’t even one month old yet, was in Zhao Jie’s hands. She quickly declared her position, “Your Highness, please spare my life. This subject will tell you everything that you want to know.”

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At the lake in the western part of the palace, spring had returned to the earth and all living things had resuscitated from their winter slumber. The willows had produced new branches and the roses in the nearby flowerbeds were blossoming. The beautiful flowers were competing with each other to bloom first. Everything had become verdant and lush. A cool breeze blithely blew by and brought a multitude of interlaced scents. Anyone looking at this scene would feel relaxed and happy.

Noble Consort Ning and a few other imperial concubines were sitting in an octagonal pavilion. From far away, it seemed like a harmonious and happy scene with their peaceful discussion and smiling faces. This wasn’t surprising. Previously, Noble Consort Ning had been very favored and the people below her had done their best to curry favor with her. Although she wasn’t as favored as before, she still had her status of “Noble Consort” and she knew how to conduct herself. Thus, her interactions with the harem’s imperial concubines were still pretty good.

Just as they were happily talking, someone called out, “The Empress has arrived.”

Following the sound of the voice, they saw two people walking

towards here from a nearby apricot tree. Empress Chen was wearing a jacket embroidered with flowering branches of chrysanthemums and a red skirt that was embroidered with a pattern of dragons in the sea. Her beautiful appearance was calm.

Princess Consort Jing was walking at Empress Chen's side. Princess Consort Jing was young and her beautiful appearance seemed delicate. She was wearing an apricot-colored top embroidered with butterflies and flowers. Below the top, there was a beaded eight-treasure style skirt. The skirt swayed as she walked and revealed an exquisite pair of embroidered, satin red shoes below. Shining pearls had been stitched to the top of the shoes and the contrast made her appearance seem even more moving. She seemed like a delicate beauty that had appeared from golden and silver mountains.

Although their styles were completely different, it didn't seem incompatible as the two people walked together. Instead, it was a feast for the eyes.

When Empress Chen walked over here, the imperial concubines in the pavilion saluted her one by one. Empress Chen waved her hand to gesture for them to stand up.

"Why are you all gathered here?" Empress Chen asked.

One of the imperial concubines said, "Older sister Ning saw that the weather was pretty good today and asked us to come here."

Empress Chen said, "Oh." Then, she calmly glanced at Noble Consort Ning.

Noble Consort Ning pursed her lips into a smile and asked, "Where's Liuli? She seems to rarely come out these days. Older sister, you should have her go outside more frequently and walk around. Didn't the imperial doctor say that there's health benefits to getting more sunlight?"

Empress Chen looked at Noble Consort Ning and lightly said,

“Liuli hasn’t been feeling well lately. This empress has told her to recuperate by staying inside and resting.”

Noble Consort Ning smiled and didn’t say another word.

However, the imperial concubine that had spoken before and was wearing a dark green robe with wide sleeves said, “Is the sixth princess’s health still doing poorly? When this concubine saw her recently, she seemed healthy.”

Empress Chen’s expression didn’t change as she said, “It can only be blamed that Liuli was born under an ill-fortune star. She was poisoned at a young age. It’s already pretty good that she’s still alive.”

Once these words were said, the other nobles followed along by saying similar words.

One of the imperial concubines sighed and said, “Consort Shu truly had a malevolent heart. Fortunately, she’s already dead under His Majesty’s order. Otherwise, who knows how many other people she would have harmed?”

On the side, Noble Consort Ning stayed silent.

Empress Chen interrupted the concubine’s words and slowly said, “Now that you mention it, it’s such a coincidence. A poison called kui ning poisoned Liuli. It’s extracted from quinine trees that only grow in Yunnan province. This empress heard that Noble Consort Ning’s family is from Yunnan province. Noble Consort Ning, have you heard of this poison before?”



## Chapter 148.1

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Noble Consort Ning's slightly changed expression attracted other people's attention. She politely half rose out of her chair and said, "Older sister, you might have forgotten. Younger sister entered the palace when I was fifteen years old. After twenty years, my memories of my hometown aren't as good as they used to be."

Empress Chen fake smiled. A cold layer of frost appeared in her eyes as she stared at Noble Consort Ning. Her gaze seemed like it could penetrate and see through Noble Consort Ning's inner thoughts. "Is that so? This empress didn't know that younger sister's memory was that poor."

Seeing Empress Chen and Noble Consort Ning going back and forth, the other three imperial concubines noticed that something seemed strange and consciously stepped to the side.

In the end, Empress Chen still had some degree of rationality. She didn't uncover Noble Consort Ning's true colors here. She lightly glanced at Noble Consort Ning and said, "This empress is leaving. Younger sisters, enjoy yourselves here."

"Respectfully sending off Her Majesty, the empress."

Noble Consort Ning watched Empress Chen's figure as she walked farther away. Although Noble Consort Ning's expression hadn't changed much, her nails were deeply sunk into her palms and her teeth were clenched together. She didn't return to her senses until someone called out to her.

With great difficulty, she was able to force herself to smile and say, "Oh, I'm not feeling well. I'm afraid I won't be able to enjoy the flowers with younger sisters today. I'm going back to rest first. Younger sisters, sit here and enjoy the view."

The three imperial concubines politely exchanged a few more words with Noble Consort Ning before she left. They only thought

she wanted to go back because she wasn't in a good mood after being stung by Empress Chen's words. Thus, they didn't think there was anything serious about this. After all, it wasn't unusual for Empress Chen and Noble Consort Ning to not get along.

Empress Chen and Wei Luo walked around the lakeside in the western part of the palace. By the time they had walked half of the circumference of the lake, it had gradually become windier, so they walked back to Qing Xi Palace. Although it was spring, there was still a spring chill in the air that couldn't be ignored, especially the cold snap during the past few days. If they weren't careful, they might catch a cold.

Zhao Liuli was currently sick for this exact reason. She had been exposed to chilly winds for too long on New Year's Eve. Then, later on, she had tired herself out too much. She had been bedridden for several days.

Empress Chen had the imperial physicians check Zhao Liuli over. They had all said that there wasn't anything seriously wrong with the princess's body. Logically, she should have already recovered from her sickness. She was just feeling depressed and anxious and this was why her sickness had lingered until now.

Empress Chen didn't have any other ideas. She could only have Wei Luo come to the palace to ease Liuli's anxiety. She didn't know what Liuli was secretly worrying about for her to become this distressed.

Wei Luo obeyed Empress Chen's order and came to Chen Hua Hall. She heard from the palace servants that the princess was in the heated room and started walking in that direction. When she came inside, she saw Zhao Liuli half-lying on the couch near the window with a blanket embroidered with purple birds covering her body. Half of her hair was scattered over her shoulders and her small face was very pale and listless. Since the time that Zhao Liuli's health had taken a turn for the better, she hadn't been sick for a long time. Seeing Liuli's desolate expression, Wei Luo felt her

heart aching.

“Liuli, what are you look at?” Wei Luo sat down on a nearby rosewood stool.

Zhao Liuli was startled by the sudden sound. When she hurriedly raised her head, Wei Luo saw that her cheeks had become thinner, which made her limpid eyes seem even bigger.

Seeing that it was Wei Luo, she let out a sigh in relief and said, “Ah Luo, why is it you?”

Wei Luo smiled and asked, “Who else would it be? The empress is worried about your health, so she had me come here to see you.” As she said this, she lowered her gaze and saw the rabbit carving in Liuli’s hand. “Are you feeling better? What’s that? Let me see.”

Zhao Liuli didn’t let go of the carving. The corners of her lips curved up and she said, “Older brother Yang Zhen carved this for me.”

Wei Luo looked away. No wonder Liuli had looked so entranced when she was looking at the carving before. So, she was thinking about Yang Zhen again. Silly girl, she had such a one-track mind. Once she had her mind set on someone, she would never change her mind. Wei Luo couldn’t resist sighing. “I asked Zhao Jie to make discreet inquiries about Yang Zhen’s current situation. Do you want to hear about it?”

Zhao Liuli’s eyes brightened and she impatiently nodded.

Wei Luo said, “He fought with the enemy head-on twice and was awarded for his meritorious service each time. Right now, he’s already been promoted to wei can general. He’ll probably be coming back to the capital soon.”

(T/N: Wei can general is above lieutenant general and below a full general.)

Then, she took out a letter from her sleeve and handed it over to Zhao Liuli. She said, “This letter was written by Yang Zhen. His

courage was certainly big. He actually asked older brother Prince Jing to help him deliver this letter since things can't be easily sent into the palace."

Zhao Liuli accepted the letter. She didn't have time to respond to Wei Luo's teasing. She hurriedly opened the letter and read it.

The letter wasn't long. There were only a few sentences. Yang Zhen didn't know how to write many words. When Zhao Liuli had come back from class as a child, she would call him into the room and secretly teach him how to write.

After reading the contents of the letter, Zhao Liuli blinked and teardrop after teardrop dripped down from her eyes. A moment later, her tears had dampened the letter.

Startled, Wei Luo asked, "What's wrong? What did he write in the letter?"

Zhao Liuli rubbed her eyes and spoke in a low, muffled voice, "Older brother Yang Zhen was injured."

Wei Luo asked, "Is it serious?"

Zhao Liuli shook her head. "He didn't say." There weren't many words in the letter. Yang Zhen had only written that he received a chest wound by the rebel army, but he didn't say how serious it was. But Zhao Liuli knew that he liked to hide information about himself and rarely let told her anything. The injury was probably very serious. Otherwise, he wouldn't have written that she should marry someone else if he didn't come back.

During this recent period, Empress Chan had become more pressuring towards finding her a husband and had rejected all the excuses she had thought of.

If Yang Zhen didn't come back, what would she do?

## Chapter 148.2

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On the other side, Noble Consort Ning's expression was unpleasant as she sat in a rosewood chair inside her room.

Seeing her expression, Yang Mama, who was one of her personal servants, comfortingly said, "Your Highness, what's there to be angry about? Her Majesty said those words to upset you because she can't obtain His Majesty's favor. Doesn't that show how important you are to His Majesty? From this servant's perspective, you should cool your temper. Isn't His Majesty going to come here tonight? You should put these troublesome thoughts to the side. It's more important to serve His Majesty well." She smiled and added, "If you have his Majesty's favor, what's there to be afraid of?"

Noble Consort Ning squeezed the armrest. She wasn't that angry. She just felt anxious because Empress Chen had suddenly mentioned what had happened back then. She kept thinking that Empress Chen must know something.

She waved her hand and said, "Never mind. Bring me a cup of tea. I'm thirsty."

Yang Mama nodded and left the room.

Shortly after, she heard footsteps from behind and a cup of tea was placed on the eight-immortal style table. Noble Consort Ning thought Yang Mama had come back and didn't spare another thought. She picked up the light yellow cloisonné cup that had a pattern of orchids and took a sip. She furrowed her eyebrows and said, "Why is it cold?"

A voice that sounded old said, "Your Highness, please calm your anger. This servant will get Your Highness another cup of tea."

Noble Consort Ning noticed that something was wrong and turned her head to look behind her. "What happened to your

voice? It doesn't sound the same as normal...”

Before her sentence was finished, she suddenly stopped.

This grey-haired, coarse-looking woman with a deeply wrinkled face wasn't Yang Mama.

Noble Consort Ning eyes widened her eyes and fearfully asked, “Who are you? Why are you here?” After saying these words, she wanted to call out for the other servants to come here.

But, the old woman was faster than her and had already reached her side with her face lifted up. “Your Highness, have you forgotten me? I'm Qing Fei. This servant served you fifteen years ago.”

Qing Fei. Qing Fei was a servant girl that had entered the palace with her... Noble Consort Ning could no longer hide the surprise and horror in her eyes. She tightly clutched the armrest and asked, “Why are you here? Didn't you leave the palace?”

Back then, Qing Fei had known the truth. Noble Consort Ning had decided it would be dangerous for her to stay at her side, but she also couldn't bear to kill her, so she released her from the palace and married her to a faraway place.

She never expected that she would still come back!

Qing Fei lowered her head and said, “Your Highness, you don't know. Although this servant hasn't been in the palace during the past years, I still couldn't escape condemnation of my conscience. There wasn't a single day when I didn't feel guilty towards Her Majesty and Princess Tianji.”

Noble Consort Ning furiously stood up from the chair and said while staring at her, “Why are you saying these words? Tell me. Who brought you into the palace?” She still couldn't grasp this point. She carefully thought and made the connection between Empress Chen's words today. She sternly asked, “Did the empress bribe you here to say these words to me?”

Qing Fei shook her head. "It's not related to Her Majesty. This servant just whole-heartedly wanted to see Your Highness.... This servant had harmed the young princess and now this servant's grandson is facing hardship. It must be that the Heavens are punishing this servant's mistake. This servant came here to plead with Your Highness. Please say a few good words in front of Buddha for this servant. Say that you were the one that pressured this servant. This servant was only following orders. Ask Buddha to spare this servant's grandson."

Noble Consort Ning was extremely angered and her mind was also slightly muddled. "What nonsense are you saying? Get out of the palace. Otherwise, don't blame me for not caring about sentiments from past days."

Qing Fei's entire family's lives were in Zhao Jie's hands. She wasn't afraid of Noble Consort Ning's threat. If she died, the rest of her family would be safe from death. She added, "Your Highness, you have children too. You must understand the feelings of a mother when her children are faced with hardship. Has your heart not felt the slightest bit of guilt during the past years?"

Noble Consort Ning kicked her and angrily said, "Guards! Bring this madwoman away."

Qing Fei clutched Noble Consort Ning's skirt with a death grip. With a face full of tears, she said, "Your Highness, please help this servant. This servant is out of options... This servant lives in regret every day. Your Highness, why did you harm that one-year-old princess? Aren't you afraid that Buddha will punish you?"

There wasn't any sound from outside and no one came inside to bring Qing Fei away. It was as if Noble Consort Ning and Qing Fei were the only two people in the entire room.

However, Noble Consort Ning was currently in a fit of anger and didn't notice the strangeness. Provoked by Qing Fei's words, she grabbed her chin and said, "Why should I be afraid? Let me tell

you, I've never believed in Buddha. So what if I poisoned her? That Zhao Liuli is just lucky she's still alive. If Buddha wants to punish me, I would have been punished a long time ago. Why delay things until now?"

Qing Fei was half-kneeling on the ground. She didn't say another word.

For a long time, the room was utterly quiet. If a pin were to be dropped, it would be heard. It was only now that Noble Consort Ning realized that something was off. They had been so loud. Palace servants and guards should have come inside to check. She had already called out a few times, but no one had come. Moreover, Yang Mama had gone to get tea. Why hadn't she come back yet after such a long time?

Noble Consort Ning's heart dropped like a stone. She had a very bad premonition.

"Since Buddha can't punish you, then this emperor will punish you." A cold, angry voice came from outside the room's entrance.

Noble Consort Ning turned her head to look and saw Emperor Chong Zhen wearing a dark green robe embroidered with a pair of dragons surrounding a pearl. He was standing in the doorway and fiercely staring at her.



# Chapter 149.1

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Noble Consort Ning's face paled. Her knees felt weak and there was a buzzing sound in her mind. Panic-stricken, she only continued to look at Emperor Chong Zhen.

The emperor walked into the hall. Two red-robed palace servants were following him.

Noble Consort Ning just remembered that the emperor had said he would be coming here today. But, why was it so early? It was an hour earlier than the usual time. She opened and closed her mouth and finally stammered, "Your Majesty..."

However, Emperor Chong Zhen didn't look at her. He lowered his gaze to look at Qing Fei, who was kneeling on the ground. He icily asked, "Were you speaking the truth?"

Qing Fei's head was lowered. In reverence before the emperor, she kowtowed once before she said, "To respond to Your Majesty, this servant spoke truthfully. If there's even a single false word, may this servant die a horrible death..."

Flustered and exasperated, Noble Consort Ning reprimanded, "Quiet!"

Then, she turned her head toward the emperor and said, "Your Majesty, don't listen to these crazy words. This woman is a total stranger. I don't know why she appeared here today. Someone must be trying to frame me..."

Emperor Chong Zhen indifferently looked at her. Not allowing her to have a say in the matter, he said, "This emperor didn't ask you."

Noble Consort Ning felt pained from the way he was looking at her. Her eyes immediately became red.

Emperor Chong Zhen put his arms behind his back and closed his eyes. "Tell this emperor what happened back then." His voice

seemed slightly stifled as he said, “How did Liuli get poisoned?”

Qing Fei complied with recounting what had happened back then, “It happened on Princess Tianji’s birthday banquet. Under Her Highness’s orders, this servant...”

On Zhao Liuli’s first birthday, after she had been brought to a heated room by a wet nurse to drink milk, she slowly fell asleep. Consort Shu was very curious and wanted to go see the young princess in the heated room. So, Empress Chen allowed her to go inside to look while accompany by a mama. After Consort Shu left the room, two servant girls distracted the servants in the heated room and Qing Fei entered the heated room. Qing Fei poured the poison onto Zhao Liuli’s mouth. Zhao Liuli was only a child that had just turned one year old. Her pitiful cries were quiet and soft. Qing Fei hardened her heart. After accomplishing her task, she sneakily left the heated room.

Afterwards, when they discovered that Zhao Liuli have been poisoned, the crime naturally landed on Consort Shu’s head. After all, she had been the only person that entered the heated room. Consort Shu pleaded that she was innocent and that she was wrongly accused, but no one believed her. They thought she was lying. Emperor Chong Zhen bestowed a cup of poisoned wine to her and she died in the palace.

Qing Fei’s voice became quieter and quieter, “... This servant has been living in remorse during the past years. This servant feels so guilty towards sixth princess.”

The hands that Emperor Chong Zhen had put behind his back clenched tighter and tighter. The vertical and horizontal blue veins on the back of his hands looked quite terrible. He closed his eyes and his face seemed like it was covered in a layer of frost. Word by word, he asked, “Consort Ning, is there anything else that you want to say?”

Noble Consort Ning kneeled down in front of the emperor. With

a face full of tears, she said, “Your Majesty, you can’t listen to this woman’s lies. This consort really doesn’t recognize her or know why she’s repeatedly slandering me...”

Emperor Chong Zhen opened his eyes and looked at her as he asked, “You don’t recognize her?”

Noble Consort Ning shook her head, “This consort doesn’t recognize her.”

Emperor Chong Zhen sneered. He waved his wide-sleeve and said, “Then call over the female official from Shang Bureau. This emperor wants to know whether or not this person exists in the records!”

Shortly after, the female official from Shang Bureau hurriedly rushed over. She was holding the books with the names of all of the palace servants. After the female official learned of the emperor’s intention, she hastily flipped through the books. A short time later, she stopped on a page. “To respond to Your Majesty, over a decade ago, Noble Consort Ning did release three palace servants. Qing Fei was one of them. Qing Fei’s palm has a mole. Your Majesty, you can check for yourself.”

Emperor Chong Zhen lowered his eyes and looked at Qing Fei, “Turn over both of your hands.”

Qing Fei spread out her hands. On her left hand’s palm, there was an obvious mole. It was especially prominent underneath the candlelight.

Noble Consort Ning collapsed onto the ground as if her entire body’s strength had been sucked away.

Emperor Chong Zhen looked away from Qing Fei and looked at Noble Consort Ning again. There was only coldness and disappointment left in his eyes. He suddenly thought of the words that Empress Chen had once said to him. At the time, they were lying on the same bed and their relationship wasn’t as stiff as it is

now. Empress Chen had pleaded with him to reinvestigate Liuli's poisoning. She had suspected that matter wasn't as simple as it seemed since Noble Consort Ning's palace servants had also been seen near the heated room. This was the first and only time she showed weakness in front of him.

When he thought about it now, her expression had been so helpless and she had entrusted all of her hopes on him. However, not only did he not reinvestigate, he blamed her for being unnecessarily suspicious. At the time, Empress Chen's maiden family's strength and influence was becoming stronger and stronger. He had been afraid of the consequences. It wouldn't be good for him to favor Empress Chen too much. He also had the intentions of promoting Noble Consort Ning's maiden family, so he frequently went over to Noble Consort Ning's hall. On the surface, it seemed that he had really favored Noble Consort Ning.

Much later on, Empress Chen never mentioned this issue again.

Emperor Chong Zhen opened and closed his mouth for a moment before hoarsely saying, "Guards!"

Two palace servants came into the room, "Greetings Your Majesty."

The emperor said, "Starting from today, Noble Consort Ning is stripped of her title and she'll only be a common person. For now, she'll be temporarily detained in the Golden Hall."

Ning-shi cried out, "Your Majesty!"

Although the Golden Hall had a nice name, it wasn't any different from a cold palace. The palace didn't have a specific place for the cold palace in the current dynasty, but no one had lived in this cold and desolate hall for a long time. It had been earmarked to be used as a cold palace. In the past dynasties, concubines that had lost favor had all been sent here without exception.

Emperor Chong Zhen wasn't moved by her actions. Ning-shi

moved forward to grab his sleeve, but he heartlessly brushed her away. Ning-shi struggled as if her life depended on it, “This consort had only done this for His Majesty. Your Majesty, you once said that you would forgive this consort no matter what...”

Emperor Chong Zhen furrowed his eyebrows. He had probably forgotten that he had once said these words. He expressionlessly looked at her and said, “This emperor can choose to forgive you and can also choose to strip you of your title. You dared to even poison this emperor’s daughter. Do you think this emperor will let you off?”

The palace servants grabbed Ning-shi by her shoulders and forced her to walk outside.

She probably had never thought she would have a day like this. She had changed from the lofty Noble Consort Ning to a common person.

Emperor Chong Zhen darkly looked at Qing Fei and dealt with the offender by ordering, “Bring the person away and have her killed by cutting away the flesh from her bones!”

Qing Fei trembled and her face turned deathly pale.

After everyone else left, the room was utterly empty except for the emperor. The servants that had served Noble Consort Ning were kneeling outside. They were scared that they would also be implicated. Fortunately, the emperor still had his rationality. After standing in the room for a while, he slowly walked out.

Eunuch Chu came forward and asked, “Your Majesty, where are you going?”

Emperor Chong Zhen stopped walking. A long time later, he finally said, “To Zhao Yang Hall.”

## Chapter 149.2

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The lights in Zhao Yang Hall had been extinguished a while ago. From far away, only the octagonal lanterns in the verandah were lit. The two palace servants that guarded the entrance were half-asleep. Seeing that the emperor had come here, they completely woke up from their drowsiness. Stunned, they said, “Greetings Your Majesty...”

Emperor Chong Zhen waved his hand and looked inside the hall, “Where’s the empress?”

With his head lowered, the palace servant said, “To respond to Your Majesty, Her Majesty has already went to sleep.”

The other servant had sense of discernment and hurriedly said, “This servant will go inside to wake Her Majesty up.”

Emperor Chong Zhen called out to stop him. After a while, he finally said, “No need, this emperor will leave after staying for a bit.” Then, he started walking inside.

The two palace servants looked at each other in dismay. Since His Majesty had come here late at night, why wasn’t he staying here to sleep?

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Emperor Chong Zhen stood by the bed and opened the layer upon layer of expensive curtains. He looked at Empress Chen, who was deeply asleep. The lighting in the room was dim. There was only the moonlight that spilled through the window without any lit lamps. He remembered that she used to like to leave a lamp lit when she was sleeping. There had been too much death in the first half of her life. She didn’t feel safe in the dark.

When did she stop needing light to sleep? How many of her changes had he missed?

The emperor sat down at the edge of the bed and stretched his

hand out to stroke Empress Chen's cheek. His voice was deep and low in the night, "Wan Wan, I came too late."

Empress Chen furrowed her eyebrows. The emperor's body stiffened. He thought she had awoken, but she only turned around and said in a voice of suffering, "Liuli..."

The emperor's hand froze in the air.

Liuli. Their Liuli.

The emperor slowly drew his hand back and gripped the bed's wooden frame so tightly that a piece of the wood was torn off.

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Today was Spring Lantern Festival. Prince Jing's residence's servants were all filled with joy. They were even happier now than they had been during New Year. This was to be expected. Everyone was given half a day off today and could go home to see their families. Of course, they would be happy.

Wei Luo already didn't have much interest towards this type of holiday. Coincidentally, Xiu Chun's people had brought the clothes she had ordered over today, so she spent the afternoon looking at the clothes in her room. After counting, there were a total of eighteen outfits, twelve pairs of shoes, sixteen handkerchiefs, and eighteen circular fans. Moreover, these were only items to be used during spring. Wei Luo looked through these items one by one. None of the styles were repeated and the workmanship was meticulous with complicated decorative designs. Other stores couldn't produce this degree of fine detail.

Wei Luo stood by the couch and contemplated which dress should be match with which pair of shoes and handkerchief. She was so serious about this that she disregarded Zhao Jie, who was nearby.

"Are you done picking?" Zhao Jie whispered into her ear.

Wei Luo turned her head to look at him. She looked at him from

to top bottom, “Are you leaving?” He was dressed so properly, but she didn’t hear him mentioning that he was going out today.

Zhao Jie squeeze her palm, “Today is Spring Lantern Festival. This prince will take you out to walk around. You’ve probably been very bored lately, right?”

When they came back from Tong Zhou, it had been the start of New Year’s celebration and they had been busy for several day. During the past few days, there had been spring rain and Wei Luo could only stay inside. There was finally a clear sky today.

Wei Luo looked at him and leisurely asked, “What did you say?”

Zhao Jie recalled his previous words and quickly realized what the young girl was referring to. He turned her around so that she was facing him and rubbed her little face, “Husband wants to take you outside to walk around.”

Wei Luo didn’t like him referring to himself as “this prince” in front of her. Before, they hadn’t been married yet. But he still continued to use these words after they were married. He was clearly putting on airs.

Wei Luo wouldn’t given Zhao Jie the opportunity to put on airs and requested that he change his speech. He had changed his speech, but sometimes he would forget and inadvertently refer to himself as “this prince”. He wasn’t intentionally putting on airs. It was just difficult to immediately change this habit.

Wei Luo frowned, “I still have things I want to ask you.”

Zhao Jie moved them to the couch and sandwiched her between the couch and him. He hovered above her lips and asked, “What do you want to ask?”

Wei Luo raised her eyes. Her long, curled eyelashes looked like the wings of a butterfly. The butterfly flew away from the water and revealed limpid eyes. She said, “Did you know that Consort Ning had become a ordinary citizen?”



Zhao Jie's expression didn't change, only the smile on his lips became lighter. He nodded.

“Were you the one that arranged for Chang-shi to enter the palace?” Wei Luo asked.

Zhao Jie continued to nod.

Wei Luo furrowed her eyebrows. “But, Chang-shi's confession wouldn't have been sufficient evidence. Can you find the other two accomplice servant girls as well?”

Zhao Jie's eyes were slightly mocking. He indifferently said, “After imperial father found out the truth, he'll definitely send people to look for these two people.” Whenever Emperor Chong Zhen was mentioned, he would always have this expression.

Hearing these words, Wei Luo's heart became peaceful. No matter what, Consort Ning wouldn't be able rise up again. As for the fifth prince, Emperor Chong Zhen would probably never put him in an important position. Wei Luo looked at Zhao Jie. Could it be that he'll become emperor in the future? Then, would she become the empress?

That would truly be a novel experience.

Wei Luo sat astride Zhao Jie's body and raised her head to stare at him.

Zhao Jie couldn't help laughing, “What are you looking at?”

Wei Luo closed her eyes and brightly smiled, “I'm looking at my husband.”

# Chapter 150.1

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Zhao Jie faintly smiled. He calmly asked, “Is your husband good-looking?”

Wei Luo shamelessly boasted, “Almost as attractive as me.”

Zhao Jie snickered and leaned over to bite her small lips. Those small, red lips were plump and soft. When she opened and closed them, they constantly tempted him. He had wanted to taste them since the beginning of this conversation.

Jin Lu and Bai Lan hurriedly turned around and put Wei Luo’s clothing and shoes into a red sandalwood wardrobe that was carved with a spiraling stem and leaf pattern. With their heads lowered, they pretended that they couldn’t hear the sounds of Zhao Jie and Wei Luo kissing.

At first, Wei Luo had used her hand to cover Zhao Jie’s mouth so that he couldn’t kiss her. But, he had firmly grabbed both of her hands. As soon as her hand loosened away from his mouth, he immediately rushed in. After Zhao Jie finally let go of her hands, his thumb stroked her lips. “What did you eat? Your mouth is so sweet.”

Wei Luo truthfully said, “When you went to the study, I ate a few pieces of sweet osmanthus and lotus root cake.”

No wonder her mouth had tasted like osmanthus. Zhao Jie smiled, then he said, “Next time, eat snow fungus in milky egg soup. That tastes pretty good when kissing.”

Wei Luo cast a rebuking glance towards him. She wasn’t going to fulfill his ridiculously request. She ate food for her own enjoyment, it wasn’t for him to enjoy when he kissed her!

Wei Luo said, “Then, next time I’ll eat Chinese celery dumplings.”

The two of them had lived together for such a long time. Wei Luo

already had a thorough understanding of the food that Zhao Jie liked. He didn't like spicy sweet food. He liked to eat fish, but he only ate the small, tender piece of flesh on a fish's cheeks. He was an upperside, bolded letters, super picky eater.

In addition, there was also a vegetable that Zhao Jie refused to eat. Chinese celery. He felt that Chinese celery had a strange taste. After Wei Luo had married into Prince Jing's residence, she didn't see the shadow of Chinese celery for several months.

There was one time when she wanted to eat Chinese celery prawn dumplings and Zhao Jie had deeply looked at her before ordering the kitchen to make them.

Afterwards, Wei Luo realized that Zhao Jie didn't like to eat Chinese celery.

Zhao Jie didn't react to her teasing. He picked her up and pinched her waist and said, "Go change your clothes. We'll be going out soon."

Wei Luo skeptically looked at him. She wasn't quite sure if his words were true or not. He clearly had a reaction in that spot. Did he really still want to go out? Wei Luo climbed down from his body and lied down on a nearby, large pillow. She turned her head, so that her large, bright, black eyes were facing him. "I don't want to go out. There's nothing interesting outside. Every year, it's guessing riddles and releasing lanterns in water. I'm already bored of it."

Zhao Jie looked at her. He didn't know why she was going so far as to show helplessness and desire to be pampered. He asked, "What do you want to do then?"

Wei Luo's eyes turned and she stretched her hand out to point at his nose. She deliberately said, "You."

Zhao Jie didn't say a word. He looked at her with a faint smile. A long time later, he held her finger and said, "Be good. I'll let you

play after we come back.”

Clearly, Wei Luo was the one that was tempting him. But, Wei Luo was also the one that blushed. She suddenly took her finger back and asked, “Big brother, how are you going to let me play?”

Zhao Jie slightly raised his eyebrow, “Up to you?”

Wei Luo seriously considered. In this matter, she hadn’t studied as thoroughly as Zhao Jie. After thinking back and forth, she couldn’t think of a good idea. In the end, she was a young girl. After thinking of wicked things in broad daylight, her face quickly turned red. Wei Luo sat up from the large pillow and pushed Zhao Jie away. “I’ll think about it after we come back. You can leave the room, I’m going to change my clothes.”

Zhao Jie couldn’t stop himself from laughing and didn’t tease her any further.

Wei Luo called Jin Lu and Bai Lan inside and changed into a new spring outfit that had been made by Xiu Chun. It was a short, lilac top and a high skirt. The sleeves and collar had both been embroidered with an exquisite and complicated peach blossoms in the water pattern. It had an empire waistline with a lilac sash that was as wide as a palm and made her silhouette seem even more like willow tree.

Wei Luo was worried that it would get colder at night, so she also put on a silver and gold shawl. By the time her hair was arranged into double loops at the top, an hour had passed since Zhao Jie left the room.

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The streets were more lively than usual during the Spring Lantern Festival and were bustling with activity. The shops were open all night long. There were brightly colored and fantastically odd lanterns of every description everywhere.

After Wei Luo and Zhao Jie passed through the streets, they

stopped at the capital's largest river, Huai An River.

Huai An River becomes especially lively every Spring Lantern Festival. The surface of the river would be covered in exquisitely decorated pleasure boats. Most of the boats assembled here belonged to the capital's wealthy and powerful families. Not only could the men enjoy watching the moon and drink on the boats, there were also beautiful women on the boats to add to the festivities. The capital's most famous red light district street was on one side of Huai An river. Sitting in the boats, they could even smell the scent of cosmetics. This was place that noblemen like to go to the most for amusement.

In addition to the men, noble women also liked to go on the boats to have fun. They could chat, play string instruments, or compose poetry. Perhaps, they might even have a chance encounter with their paramour. That would also be a wonderful pastime.

Wei Luo turned her head to look at Zhao Jie, "Big brother why did you bring me here?"

Zhao Jie stroked her head. "Let's go up."

There was a magnificently decorated pleasure boat in front of them. Wei Luo looked at it. It was bigger than the surrounding pleasure boats. Not only that, the pleasure boat's decorations was extremely dazzling. The hull was carved with a stylized cloud pattern. Through the lattice windows, she could even see the furniture inside. All in all, it was as exquisite as jewels down to the smallest detail.

Wei Luo held Zhao Jie's hand for support as they went onto the boat. She looked around, then she suddenly turned her head and asked, "Is this the reason why you insisted on getting me to come out today?"

Zhao Jie curved his lips into a smile and declined to comment.

There was a table of fine food and wine on the rosewood couch.

Wei Luo hadn't eaten anything all evening. She had originally wanted to buy some green pea pastries on the streets to fill her stomach, but Zhao Jie had stopped her and said street foods weren't clean. So, she was still feeling hungry right now.

Wei Luo sat down on the couch and picked up a flaky pastry that was shaped like a butterfly to put into her mouth. She blinked. "The taste is pretty good."

Zhao Jie raised his hand to wipe away the crumb at the corner of her lips. The young girl's face was too soft and he couldn't resist stroking it. "Then eat more of it."

Wei Luo scooped up a spoonful of rose glutinous rice ball soup and brought it to Zhao Jie's mouth. "Did you ask me to come out just to eat a meal?"

Zhao Jie ate the glutinous rice ball and only lightly smiled without saying a word.

Wei Luo felt there was something strange about Zhao Jie's behavior, but she couldn't guess the reason, so she just lowered her head and silently ate. There was a mini stove on the table, so the food was still warm. A short while later, Wei Luo was full.

Zhao Jie warmed a bottle of wine, poured a cup, and pushed it towards her. "This wine was made from fermenting osmanthus flowers and can be drunk by women. Try it."

Wei Luo looked at him. "What are you planning?"

Zhao Jie chuckled and said, "Naturally, I'm planning to get this beautiful girl drunk and sell her to Prince Jing's residence to warm his bed."

Jokester.

Wei Luo pursed her lips and looked at him without saying a word.

## Chapter 150.2

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Zhao Jie's eyes met Wei Luo's line of sight and he suddenly thought of how she had almost been sold by Du-shi when she was six years old. He stopped smiling and went over to her side to bring her into his arms. With his chin on her head, he said, "Ah Luo, do you know what decision I'm happiest about in this life?"

Wei Luo leaned against his chest and blinked her limpid eyes. "What?"

Zhao Jie said, "I'm happy that I didn't let you off for biting me when you were six years old."

Wei Luo recalled that scene and curved her lips.

Zhao Jie held her small hand and fiddled with her soft fingers. "At that time, I thought you were such a pretty, little girl. But, you were also too crafty and unruly and needed to be properly disciplined." He paused, lowered his head, and bit Wei Luo's cheek. "You bit me and then said that I didn't taste good. You're the first person that dared to do something like that."

Wei Luo couldn't resist smiling. She turned her around to look at him. "Then, how come you didn't discipline me later on?"

Later, he had found out about her plight and felt that this little girl's life wasn't easy, so he had a moment of compassion. And after that, every time he saw her, she always made him feel very interested.

Both of Zhao Jie's hands were around Wei Luo's waist as he smiled and said, "Aren't I disciplining you every night?"

Wei Luo didn't know why he went back to saying nonsense. She glared at him for a moment, pushed him away, and said, "I'm going to the prow of the boat to walk around."

She was like a child that slipped away after finishing a meal.

The riverside was windy and the prow of the boat was slightly cold. Wei Luo wrapped her arms around herself. Then, she suddenly felt something on her shoulders. When she turned her head to look, she saw Zhao Jie standing behind her. He had taken off his black fur cloak to give to her. Instead of politely declining, she tightly wrapped the cloak around herself. Looking at the far away glimmering riverside, she suddenly saw something bright. She pointed in that direction and said, “Big brother, look. What’s that?”

She saw numerous sky lanterns gradually being released and floating up into the sky on the riverbank. It looked like a vast sky full of radiant stars. Wei Luo counted. There were at least a hundred and ten lanterns. Along with the sky lanterns, there were also countless river lanterns being released. Carried by the river current, various types of river lanterns floated by their boat. It seemed as if Huai An River had changed into a starry sky that stretched from far away to here. It felt as if a thousand stars were slowly being sent in front of Wei Luo.

The nearby pleasure boats seemed to have disappeared and only their boat was left on the river. Wei Luo’s large eyes open wider and she looked around. A countless number of river lanterns surrounded their pleasure boat. There were lotus flower lanterns, turtle lanterns, Chinese unicorn lanterns, carp lanterns, and so on. Wei Luo’s eyes felt blurry from this dazzling sight. She crouched down to pick up a lotus flower and looked at it for a long time in a daze.

She heard Zhao Jie’s voice from above her head, “Ah Luo, do you like it?”

Wei Luo stood up and raised her head to look at him, “Did you do this?”

Zhao Jie nodded.

“Were these lanterns also made by you?” She lifted the lotus



flower lantern in her hand.

Zhao Jie said, "Everything was made by me."

Wei Luo, "So that's why they're not as good-looking as the ones being sold on the streets."

Zhao Jie just looked at her.

She suddenly rushed forward, stood on her tiptoes, and wrapped her arms around his neck. She rubbed against his chest and said, "But I really like them."

Zhao Jie chuckled and wrapped his arms around her waist. "It's good as long as you like them. It was worth this prince secretly making these lanterns this month."

Wei Luo just remembered that Zhao Jie had frequently been going to his study during the past period without asking her to go with him to keep him company. Although she was curious, she was happy to spend her time freely so she didn't think too much about it. Unexpectedly, he had been in the study making river lanterns. She raised her small face and asked, "How come I didn't know that you knew how to make river lanterns?"

Zhao Jie said, "I naturally learned how to make them for the princess consort."

Wei Luo's smile was splendid. Leaning against him, she firmly kissed him. "I want to bring these lanterns back home and store them in a separate room so that I can look at them every day when I think about them."

Zhao Jie smiled, "Okay, I'll have Zhu Geng and Yang Hao scoop them out of the water later."

The people on Huai An's riverbank looked at the lanterns in the river and only knew that someone had reserved this entire river. But they didn't know the identity of the person until someone shouted, "It's Prince Jing's boat!"

As it turns out, Prince Jing had prepared this to make Princess Consort Jing happy.

There wasn't any lack of girls on the riverbank looking at this scene. They were so envious that their eyes turned red. At this moment, they were all thinking, so what if Prince Jing was a brutal person that wreaked havoc as long as he treated the girl that he loved well? Besides, when a rigid piece of iron softened around a single person, wasn't that even more admirable? Unfortunately, they couldn't be this fortunate. Prince Jing's entire heart belonged to Princess Consort Jing.

When the pleasure boat was about to reach the riverbank, Wei Luo was holding the carved railings on the prow of the boat and leaning back against Zhao Jie's chest. As they were talking, a black figure appeared in the water, jumped onto the boat, and a sword stabbed towards them!

While Wei Luo was feeling startled, Zhao Jie had quickly moved her closer into his arms, turned around, grabbed the other person's wrist, and kicked the person back into the river.

Zhu Geng and Yang Hao appeared out of nowhere and stood in front of Zhao Jie and Wei Luo, "Your Highness, please go into the boat's cabinet with the princess consort."

Assassins emerged from the water one after another as if they had long prepared for this moment. Their skills were all out of the ordinary. Fortunately, Zhu Geng and Yang Hao weren't passive guards. In addition, Zhao Jie's other guards had also rushed over here. They were able to easily defeat the opposing group.

Zhao Jie and Wei Luo entered the cabinet, but unexpectedly there was a black-robed figure hidden in the room. He had probably come into this room in advance. Hearing the sounds from outside, he knew that the other assassins had been defeated. Since the situation had already worsen to this point, he wanted to kidnap Wei Luo as a hostage. However, just as he stretched his hand out,

Zhao Jie broke his arm. The black-robed man yelled out in pain. As he was about to swallow the poison in his mouth, Zhao Jie grabbed his chin, forced him to spit out the poison, and forcefully threw him onto the floor. The black-robed man tried to escape, but Zhao Jie picked up the sword on the ground and threw it towards his back. The sword pierced through his shoulder and nailed his body to the ground.

The black-robed man trembled in pain on the ground.

Outside, it seemed as if only a moment had passed before calmness returned.

The people on the riverbank couldn't clearly see what was happening on the boat. They only saw several black figures that swayed for a moment before they stopped moving. Prince Jing's pleasure boat stably stopped at the riverbank by a willow tree.

The lighting was dim in this spot and there weren't many people on this part of the shore.

Zhao Jie said to Zhu Geng, "Bring the prisoner back to interrogate."

Zhu Geng acknowledged the order and brought the struggling black-robed figure with him as he withdrew.

Zhao Jie turned his head to look at Wei Luo. The young girl was standing in the same place as before. The top of her shoes had been splashed with blood. She raised her head and she looked at him with her tearful eyes.

## Chapter 151.1

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Affected by the sight of Wei Luo's tears, Zhao Jie picked Wei Luo up and carried her to the nearby couch. He leaned over, took off her shoes, and eased his expression. "Were you scared?"

Wei Luo saw him throwing the shoes that had been stained by someone else's blood into the charcoal burner bowl. The fire gradually engulfed the shoes. A short while later, they had been burned into ashes. She shook her head. She actually wasn't scared. She was feeling angry. She had originally been very happy tonight and the sudden appearance of the black-robed people had disturbed her happy mood. She suddenly thought of something and jumped down from the couch. Without caring that she was only wearing white socks, she started to run out of the cabin.

Zhao Jie called out from behind her, "Ah Luo!"

Wei Luo stopped at the prow of the boat and saw that the lanterns were still floating nearby. Underneath the moonlight, she could clearly see the river scene. The river had turned red from blood. The colored lanterns were immersed in the water and more or less were stained by the blood. Wei Luo flattened her lips. This time, she really was angry enough that she wanted to cry. Full of grievances, she looked at Zhao Jie and complained, "The colored lanterns have been ruined. They can't be brought back home."

Zhao Jie didn't expect that the reason she had rushed out here was look at this. His long arm stretched out and picked her up so that her feet were stepping on his feet. He lowered his head, kissed her forehead, and said, "It's okay. In the future, I'll make more for you."

Wei Luo wrapped her arms around his waist and leaned against his chest for a long time while feeling that life was difficult. She finally said, "Who were those people?"

She thought that even if they were hacked into mincemeat it

wouldn't be enough of a punishment.

Zhao Jie's eyes deepened and his voice became quieter as he said, "I don't know yet, but I feel I'll be able to find out very soon." As he said, "Let's go home," he picked Wei Luo up and carried her as they disembarked from the pleasure boat.

After returning to Prince Jing's residence, Wei Luo went to the cleaning room to take a bath and went to sleep early. Zhao Jie went to the study and asked Zhu Geng, "What information did you get from your interrogation?"

Zhu Geng said, "To respond to Your Highness, two of them bit off their tongues and died. Another two were locked up. Yang Hao is watching over them. For now, we haven't been able to get any information."

Zhao Jie turned the jade ring on his thumb. Without any changes in his expression, he said, "Continue to interrogate. Try all of the torture methods. If they continue to refuse to speak, then skin them alive."

Zhao Jie's words weren't an empty threat. It was new method of punishment. Peel off a cross-shaped layer of flesh from a prisoner's head, then pour mercury into the wound. After that, you would be able to peel off a complete piece of skin from the head to the feet. It wasn't a baseless claim when other people called him vicious and merciless.

After Zhu Geng left, Zhao Jie sat in the rounded-back chair without moving.

It wasn't difficult to guess who would try to harm him. He was just missing evidence. Zhao Zhang was the only person that was able to compete with him for the throne in the imperial court. However, Zhao Jie felt Zhao Zhang's action was unexpected. Zhao Zhang had been confined to his residence for such a long period of time and was still able to keep track of his movements and had the courage to send assassins after him. Zhao Zhang's courage wasn't

small. This choice would be cutting off all of his chances of retreating.

Unfortunately, Zhao Zhang has miscalculated the situation. The emperor was recently investigating Noble Consort Nong's matter. If Zhao Zhang acted too unreasonably, the emperor would only find him more bothersome.

Zhao Jie returned to the bedroom. After washing up, he lied down next to Wei Luo.

The young girl had fallen into a deep sleep a while ago. Her eyes were gently closed and her breathing was even. Zhao Jie raised a hand and gently stroked her eyelashes. His fingers felt itchy and his hand slowly moved downwards to trace her eyes, nose, and mouth. She was probably feeling ticklish. Her body moved away from his and she made an incoherent grumbling sound.

Zhao Jie took his hand back and suddenly thought of the scene on the pleasure boat when he had raised the sword to kill someone.

This hand was stained with blood, but she had embraced him without any concerns. He had killed someone and her first thought was whether or not the colored lanterns had been damaged. How could he not feel overjoyed about having such a wonderful, young girl?

Zhao Jie carefully brought her into his arms and quietly sighed, "Ah Luo, I wouldn't let you off in the past. In the future, I won't let you off either."

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Early next morning, Wei Luo received Zhao Liuli's invitation to enter the palace.

She heard that the army that had gone to Guang Dong to stop the armed rebellion would be coming back to the capital in a few days.

Wei Luo told Zhao Jie of her plans, tidied up, and went to the palace.

When she arrived at Chen Hua Hall, she had originally thought Zhao Liuli would be in really good mood. Unexpectedly, she saw her sitting on the couch with a depressed expression. Her face with supported by her hands as she miserably sighed.

Wei Luo walked forward and put down the pastries she had brought from outside the palace onto the small, vermillion-lacquered table carved with spirals inlaid with gold. "What's wrong?"

When Zhao Liuli saw her, it was as if she was seeing reinforcements. She grabbed her hand and said, "Ah Luo, stay here until lunch time and go with me to Zhao Yang Hall to eat lunch."

This was the reason why she was feeling miserable? Wei Luo sat down on the other side of the small table while feeling puzzled. She opened the oilpaper package and peeled a sweetened, fried chestnut. "If you don't want to go, can't you just stay in Chen Hua Hall for lunch?" Zhao Liuli usually ate her meals by herself. She would only occasionally go to Zhao Yang Hall to accompany Empress Chen for meals.

It seemed that Zhao Liuli was truly in a bad mood. She didn't even become happy at the sight of sweetened, fried chestnuts.

Zhao Liuli honestly said, "After I got better from my cold the day before yesterday, imperial mother has requested that I go to Zhao Yang Hall to eat for every meal. But, imperial father is also there and the mood between the two of them seems strange. Neither of them will speak to each other. Eating a meal there feels like being torture. At first, I thought imperial father was only carried away by a whim. One or two meals would have been fine. But, he's been there for the last three days. Even imperial mother seems annoyed."

Wei Luo froze for a moment. She didn't expect that something like this would happen. After the truth about Liuli's poisoning had been revealed, Noble Consort Ning had lost all favor. It couldn't be

that the emperor was feeling guilty towards Empress Chen and was trying to make up to her for past mistakes?

Thinking of this, Wei Luo lightly laughed as if she was going to be seeing a good show soon. “Okay, I’ll go with you.”

She was their daughter-in-law. It would be considered doing her filial duty to eat a meal with her father-in-law and mother-in-law and keep them company.



## Chapter 151.2

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Wei Luo peeled another chestnut. She had purchased these freshly cooked chestnuts on the way to the palace and they were still giving off heat. They smelled good and tasted sweet. She and Zhao Liuli both enjoyed eating these chestnuts. “Liuli, do you know about that matter with Noble Consort Ning?”

Zhao Liuli nodded. “Imperial father has imprisoned her in the Golden Hall. No one is allowed to visit her.”

Wei Luo hesitated for a moment before she added, “Then, do you know...”

Zhao Liuli’s expression didn’t change much. She lightly said, “En. I know that Noble Consort Ning was the one that poisoned me. Actually, I hate and resent her, but I know that imperial father will definitely punish her for me. Moreover, my health has already recovered, so I don’t want think about something that happened so long ago. Anyways, if I wasn’t poisoned, I probably would have never met older brother Yang Zhen.”

Wei Luo curved her lips into a smile, “You’re very good at letting things go and being positive about the past.”

If she was in Liuli’s position and someone had harmed her, she would payback the person a thousand times over. She would torture the person until death became more appealing than living.

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Noon quickly arrived. Zhao Liuli and Wei Luo walked to Zhao Yang Hall.

Thirty-six dishes covered the table. Empress Chen and Emperor Chong Zhen had already sat down. On the side, the palace servant girls had their heads lowered with nervous expressions. Zhao Liuli and Wei Luo stepped forward to pay their respects to the emperor and empress.

Seeing Wei Luo, Empress Chen's expression slightly improved. She said with a faint smile, "Ah Luo, did you come into the palace to see Liuli? Come, sit down and have a meal with this empress."

Wei Luo nodded her head in agreement. After sitting down, she glanced at Emperor Chong Zhen, who was sitting in the head seat. The emperor didn't look any differently than usual.

After lunch started, Wei Luo discovered that her earlier impression was wrong.

Emperor Chong Zhen picked up a slice of fish marinated in vinegar and soy sauce and placed it on a small, flower-pattern plate that was in front of Empress Chen. He said, "Wan Wan, this emperor remembers that you use to like to eat fish the most. This fish was delivered from Sichuan early this morning. It's fresh and tender. Try it."

Empress Chen glanced at the fish on the plate and suddenly called a palace servant girl over. "Replace this plate with a new one."

Emperor Chong Zhen's expression slightly stiffened.

The palace servant girl was put in such a difficult position that she almost wanted to cry. She didn't dare to offend either of them. Seeing that emperor didn't say anything, she finally brought over another clean plate.

Zhao Liuli gave Wei Luo a look that said, "See, I just knew they were going to be like this."

Wei Luo silently nodded. No wonder Zhao Liuli couldn't stand eating with them. If Liuli had to keep eating every meal in this type of atmosphere, Liuli would definitely be driven to madness. However, she could happily watch this play of "the emperor has changed his mind, but the empress refuses to acknowledge his love" and feel completely untroubled.

During this period where they silently ate lunch, Emperor Chong

Zhen tried adding more food to Empress Chen's plate and she had the plates taken away each time. Whichever dish he picked from, she would stop eating from that dish for the rest of the meal. The emperor had ample patience and never got angry with Empress Chen.

After the meal, the palace servants brought bowls of blood-red bird's nest soup with red dates. When a bowl was placed in front of Empress Chen, the palace servant trembled and knocked the entire bowl of soup over.

The palace servant's face turned deathly pale and she kneeled down to kowtow. "Your Majesty, please spare me."

Emperor Chong Zhen hurriedly grabbed Empress Chen's hand. A few drops of the hot soup had splashed on the back of her hand. He used this thumb to check. "Is it hot? Does it hurt?"

Empress Chen furrowed her eyebrows and suddenly took her hand away from his grasp. She said to the palace servant, "You can withdraw. Go to Qiu Mama for your punishment."

The palace servant thanked her for her benevolence as she withdrew from the hall.

Empress Chen half rose from her chair and with a courteous and alienating attitude, she said, "This consort is going inside to change clothing and won't be able to attend to Your Majesty. Your Majesty, please forgive me."

Emperor Chong Zhen embarrassedly took his stretched out hand back and helplessly said, "Wan Wan, this emperor..." He truly wanted to make things up to her.

Unfortunately, Empress Chen had already gone to her inner room without waiting for his reply.

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After leaving Zhao Yang Hall, the emperor went to his study.

Eunuch Chu shook his horsetail whisk and said, “Your Majesty, those two palace servant girls have been found.”

Emperor Chong Zhen opened a report at his convenience, briefly looked at it, and asked, “Have they been questioned?”

Eunuch Chu said, “Yes, and they confessed to everything.” After he paused and glanced at the unpredictable emperor, he added, “Ning-shi was indeed the mastermind behind Princess Tianji’s poisoning.”

Emperor Chong Zhen closed the report, shut his eyes closed, and said, “Overturn Consort Shu’s conviction.” He stopped for a moment, then he slowly said, “As for the Golden Hall... Send three feet of white silk and a cup of poisoned wine. Let Ning-shi choose for herself.”

(T/N: Sending three feet of white silk is telling her commit suicide by hanging herself.)

Eunuch Chu made a noise of acknowledgment, thought of something, and said, “Your Majesty, today is still within the fifth prince’s three month confinement period. Does Your Majesty want to write a decree to end the confinement period?”

The emperor said, “There’s no hurry. This emperor feel annoyed just by seeing him,”

Eunuch Chu didn’t say any more words before withdrawing from the room.

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An hour later, Eunuch Chu led two young eunuchs with him as he entered the Golden Hall. He looked around and couldn’t help sighing with sorrow. A consort’s glory and splendor was truly tied to the emperor. When a consort had his favor, she could have anything that she wanted. When a consort lost his favor, she became nothing. She could only live in this simple and crude place that didn’t even have any decent furnishings.

Ning-shi absent-mindedly sat by the window as if she had lost her spirit. It had only been a few days, but she had lost a lot of weight. Hearing footsteps, she hurriedly turned her head and subconsciously looked behind Eunuch Chu. Seeing that the emperor wasn't there, she inevitably showed her disappointment. Right now, the emperor wasn't even willing to see her.

The two young eunuchs placed the white silk and poisoned wine on a small table with three curved legs. Eunuch Chu lowered his eyes and said, "Ning-shi, His Majesty has said that he will allow for your body to remain intact on behalf of your many years of service to him. You can choose yourself."

Ning-shi had already seen the items on the trays before he spoke. Her face had become paler and paler. A long time later, she finally found her voice, "Did His Majesty really say this?"

She had stayed here for a few days and had originally thought that the emperor was only temporarily angry. After he calmed and based on concern from mutual affection of many years, he would definitely release her from here. After all, he had favored her so much in the past. How could she have expected that after this bitter waiting period, she had only waited to see white silk and poisoned wine?

Eunuch Chu didn't reply and only looked at her with pity.

Ning-shi sat up on the couch. She still couldn't believe his words.

Eunuch Chu urged her, "Choose one. I still have to go back to report this after its completed."

Ning-shi's heart turned into ashes. She suddenly rushed to doorway as if she had gone insane. "No. I want to see His Majesty... I want to see His Majesty."

Eunuch Chu gestured at the nearby eunuchs and the two young eunuchs quickly stopped Ning-shi and brought her back. Eunuch Chu poured a cup of wine and very politely said, "If you don't

choose, then I'll help you choose."

Eunuch Chu grasped Ning-shi's chin, forcibly poured the poisoned wine into her mouth, and tilted her chin upwards to force her to swallow.

After everything was done, Eunuch Chu threw away the golden wine cup and watched as Ning-shi slowly fell to the ground.

Ning-shi's face became paler and paler and it slowly became distorted. She was in so much pain that she couldn't make a sound. Once she stopped moving completely, Eunuch Chu led the people away and returned to the study to report that the matter had been concluded.

## Chapter 151.3

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After returning home, Wei Luo asked the servants about Zhao Jie's whereabouts and found out that he wasn't home.

"Where did the prince go?" Wei Luo asked.

Steward Wang answered, "To respond to the princess consort, His Highness went to Shen Ji Barracks and won't be coming back until the evening."

Wei Luo nodded and didn't think too much about it. She returned to her room to rest for a bit, but she ended up sleeping until dusk. She drowsily woke up, asked Jin Lu, and found out that Zhao Jie hadn't returned yet.

Jin Lu said, "Miss, are you hungry? This servant can have dinner prepared."

When there weren't other people around, Jin Lu and Bai Lan were still more accustomed to calling Wei Luo, "Miss."

Wei Luo walked to the yellow rosewood gao mian pen jia and washed her face. She considered for a moment before she said, "Let's wait. I'm not hungry."

She had felt stuffed after eating at Zhao Yang Hall at noon. Because Emperor Chong Zhen and Empress Chen didn't speak, she and Zhao Liuli had their heads down as they focused on eating. She wasn't careful and ended up eating too much. Even now, she wasn't the slightest bit hungry.

Wei Luo read a book for a while. When she looked up at the sky, she saw that night had fallen and the courtyard was completely dark. Zhao Jie still hadn't come back. She asked Jin Lu, "What time is it?"

Jin Lu said, "Miss, it's around 8 PM."

Wei Luo got up from the bed, put on her shoes and a purplish

pink wide-sleeve outer robe that was embroidered with white cranes and clouds, and walked outside. “Let’s go to Shen Ji Barrack.”

Jin Lu was startled for a moment, then she hurriedly tried to persuade, “Miss, it’s so late at night. It’s not safe for you to go outside by yourself.”

Wei Luo thought her words were reasonable, so she had Steward Wang look for a few residence guards to escort her to Shen Ji Barracks.

Jin Lu saw that her mind was made up, so she stopped trying to persuade her and called Bai Lan over to go with them.

Shen Ji Barracks was located in the northwest part of the palace. Zhao Jie was currently in charge of the troops that lived in this barrack. The imperial court considered these troops to be their most important soldiers.

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Jin Lu and Bai Lan thought that Wei Luo would rush into the barracks, but she only had the carriage stop at Shen Ji Barracks’ entrance. She didn’t make any movements to step closer to the entrance.

Jin Lu asked, “Miss, you’re not going inside?”

Wei Luo gathered her clothes closer, shook her head, and said, “He’s definitely inside handling official business. It’ll be better if I stand here to wait for him,”

Jin Lu said, “It’s windy outside. I’ll go get you another layer of clothes.”

She soon came back dejected. “We left the residence in a hurry. This servant forgot to bring thicker clothing.”

Wei Luo didn’t mind. “It’s fine. I’m not cold.”

After they waited for about half an hour, there was finally



movement inside the barracks. A person came out with a lantern and illuminated the people around him. Wei Luo immediately saw the person at the front. It was Zhao Jie.

But Zhao Jie didn't look like his usual self.

Zhao Jie was wearing a dark blue robe that was embroidered with Taotie and his sleeves and shoes were stained with blood. His expression was solemn and his phoenix eyes were cold as if he had just walked out from a sea of blood and corpses. His body was overflowing with the scent of blood.

Behind him, a soldier that wearing Zhao Jie armor was dragging a thing that she couldn't clearly identify. Wei Luo didn't realize it was a person until the thing moved. The person had already been tortured to the point that he no longer resembled a human. His body was covered in blood and there was a long, bloody line in the spots where he had had been dragged past.

The soldier asked Zhao Jie, "Your Highness, how should this person be dealt with?"

There wasn't any use in keeping this person. Zhao Jie lightly said, "Feed him to the dogs."

The soldier acknowledged the order. Just as he was preparing to leave, he saw a glimpse of a young girl from his peripheral vision. Using the light from the lanterns at the entrance, he clearly saw her face. "Your Highness, this person is..."

Zhao Jie followed his gaze and saw that Wei Luo was standing not far away and staring at him without moving.

Her brilliant and vibrant eyes were especially moving in the night. They resembled lustrous gems that could illuminate the haze in a person's heart.

Astonished, Zhao Jie walked forward, "Ah Luo?"

However, after walking two steps, he smelled the bloody scent on his body and suddenly stopped.

He had recently finished the torture session and his hands reeked of blood. But, his young girl was so clean and resembled flawless white suet jade.

Wei Luo raised her head and he saw her bright and clear eyes. He almost couldn't bear to dirty her.

Zhao Jie had originally intended to return home in the evening, but a problem had temporarily come up. One of the assassins tried to escape and was captured again.

Zhao Jie had stayed on the side to watch his subordinates interrogate the prisoner. He was planning on taking a bath when he returned home before seeing Wei Luo. Unexpectedly, she had come here.

Zhao Jie stood still on that spot. He wasn't far from Wei Luo, but he didn't continue to walk closer.

“Why did you come here?”

Wei Luo returned to her senses and walked to Zhao Jie's side. Her small hand came out of her purplish pink wide-sleeve outer robe and naturally held his hand. Her expression didn't change as if his body only smelled of his usual clear wintersweet scent instead of reeking of blood. “I was worried because big brother hadn't come back yet, so I came here to look for you.” She led him towards the carriage. “It's too cold outside. Let's quickly go home.”

# Chapter 152.1

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After Wei Luo said these words, Zhao Jie finally noticed that her fingers were icy cold. He didn't know how long she had been standing outside. Zhao Jie didn't think any further. He turned his hand over so that he was the one holding her hand and asked, "When did you come?"

Wei Luo tilted her head to think. "Around 8PM. I didn't wait that long."

It was almost 10 PM and she said it wasn't long! Zhao Jie's face sunk. His cold and dark eyes looked at Jin Lu and Bai Lan. Caught off guard by the cold glare, the two servant girls trembled.

Wei Luo knew what he was thinking and explained, "It's not their fault. I insisted on coming here. Don't be angry."

Zhao Jie rubbed both of her hands in his and they became slightly warmer. He said, "Let's go inside the carriage to talk."

They didn't realize that other people would see this gesture as very intimate.

The soldiers, who were wearing zhao jia armor, couldn't help gaping at this scene. These soldiers followed Zhao Jie as he did his work and were used to seeing him callously and unwaveringly slaughter people. But, they had never seen him act so considerate and gentle towards another person. Look, he had even personally warmed her hands. These were hands that had recently broken a prisoner's neck.

They had never heard of Zhao Jie mentioning his young princess consort, but they had heard about her from other people. They said that Prince Jing pampered his young princess consort greatly and wanted to give her the best of everything. He had even personally released water lanterns in Huai An River for her. Of course, these were just rumors. They hadn't actually seen this with

their own eyes and didn't believe these rumors. But after seeing this sight today, their eyes were opened to the truth. Look at his tender posture. Not just precious objects, he seemed as if he would even be willing to give his life to her.

A few of the soldiers came forward and respectfully said, "Greetings, Princess Consort Jing."

The soldier that had been dragging the assassin also came over. He dropped the half-alive and half-dead assassin. Just as he was about to speak, Wei Luo furrowed her eyebrows and retreated.

"Yu Zhi." Zhao Jie said.

That person immediately stood ramrod straight. "Your Highness."

Zhao Jie expressionlessly said, "Go away."

Under the gaze of everyone, Yu Zhi silently dragged the prisoner away.

Zhao Jie gently patted Wei Luo's back, then he picked her up without any warning and instructed the soldiers, "The rest of the work will be handed over to this group to handle. This prince won't come back until tomorrow." He looked at the departing Yu Zhi, narrowed his eyes, and said, "Also, the task of next month's training exercises will be led by Yu Zhi. The training will be running around the capital ten times while weighted down with 150 kilograms."

In their hearts, the soldiers felt very sympathetic towards Yu Zhi, but they only said, "Subordinates will follow orders. Your Highness, please take care as you leave."

Wei Luo didn't feel better until she got into the carriage.

Wei Luo had been exposed to the chilly winds. As soon as she sat down in the carriage, she sneezed three times. Zhao Jie's clothes had been stained by someone else's blood, so he couldn't take it off to give to her to wear. So, he wrapped her up with quilt inside the

carriage and stretched his fingers out to tap her head. “Silly, Ah Luo. Next time, you’re not allowed to come to place like this.”

Wei Luo wasn’t convinced. She blew her cheeks out and said, “Who told you not to come home? I waited for you for a long time. I was worried that something happened to you.”

Zhao Jie brought her and the quilt into his arms and asked, “How could something happen to me?”

Wei Luo said, “People tried to kill you on Huai An River yesterday. Who knows if there was another ambush waiting for you today?”

Zhao Jie felt both helpless and moved after hearing her words. He lowered his head to touch her forehead and said, “Nothing will happen to me. Ah Luo, I still have to go back to see you.”

Wei Luo nodded and honestly said, “Big brother, you should go take a bath after we return home. You stink.”

She had already tolerated this smell for too long.

Zhao Jie, “...”

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After Zhao Jie finished taking a bath and walked out from the cleansing room, Wei Luo was lying down on the couch and reading an anecdotal story.

Her two little legs were raised and her eight-treasure style skirt decorated with pearls slid down to reveal a pair of smooth white legs that resembled lotus roots. They were so snowy white that they dazzled the eyes. Jin Lu was holding a jar of wild rose ointment. First, she rubbed the ointment between her palms to warm it up, then she rubbed it on Wei Luo’s legs. The weather had recently been very dry, so Wei Luo used wild rose petals to create a skincare ointment. A little bit would be applied to her skin every night so that her skin would be smooth and soft the next day.

Zhao Jie was wearing a forest green sleeping robe with his hair behind his shoulders. He stepped forward and took the wild rose ointment from Jin Lu hand. "I'll do it."

Wei Luo heard his voice and turned her head. "Are you done washing up?"

Zhao Jie nodded, poured a little bit of wild rose ointment into palms, rubbed his hands, and placed them on Wei Luo's swinging legs. "En." By now, he was very used to doing this type of thing. Or perhaps, it should be said that Wei Luo had taught him well.

Zhao Jie's hands were coarse. When they were placed on Wei Luo's soft and smooth legs, she felt very itchy. "Aiya, it's better if Jin Lu does this. There are callouses on your hands. It hurts when you do it."

Zhao Jie didn't listen to her. He only said with a smile, "You're too delicate."

It was one thing if he was only applying wild rose ointment, but his hand wasn't honest. It slid upwards on her legs. Wei Luo grabbed his hand and turned her head to glare at him, "What are you doing?"

Zhao Jie said, "Didn't you want to play with me last night? I'm giving you the chance right now."

Wei Luo blinked and remembered what she said yesterday.

Whenever they were intimate, Zhao Jie was always the one taking charge. She would just accept whatever posture he positioned her body into and pander to his wishes. Some positions made Wei Luo feel like she was going to die from embarrassment but Zhao Jie really liked them. Moreover, whether it was length of time or force exerted, it was too much for Wei Luo to endure. She complained to him many times. He would say sweet, agreeable words that left her feeling as if she was floating on clouds, but he went back to his old habits the very next time.

If Wei Luo were allowed to take control, this would truly be a novel experience.

Wei Luo kicked his waist. “Dry your hair first before you catch a cold.”

Zhao Jie put the towel in her hand. “Help me dry my hair.”

Wei Luo sat up. She wasn’t bashful as she diligently dried his hair. Then, she used a double-edge fine-toothed comb to brush it over once.

After dinner, Zhao Jie told the servant girls to withdraw from the room. He raised his chin and smiled at Wei Luo.

Wei Luo understood his intention. He was waiting for her to “play” him.

Wei Luo pretended that she was calm as she rinsed her mouth and said, “Go to the inner room to wait for me.”

Zhao Jie raised his eyebrows, “Oh, is the princess consort going to prepare something?”

These words were too teasing.

Wei Luo glared at him, “I’m just going to change my clothes.”

Zhao Jie snickered.

## Chapter 152.2

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By the time Wei Luo came back from outside, Zhao Jie had already lied down on the bed. He was stilling properly wearing his clothes. Wei Luo had Jin Lu and Bai Lan stay outside while she walked inside towards the bed. She looked downwards at Zhao Jie.

Zhao Jie's phoenix eyes swept up to look at her. There was a hint of a smile on the corners of his lips.

Wei Luo's heart jumped for a moment. Then, she climbed onto the bed and while she was half-kneeling, she diligently untied Zhao Jie's belt.

Zhao Jie was currently still very calm.

Then, Wei Luo lifted up both of his hands and tightly tied his wrists to the yellow rosewood bed.

A hint of surprise was seen in Zhao Jie's eyes. Soon after, he meaningfully closed them. "Ah Luo, are you sure you want to play like this?"

Wei Luo thought that if she tied up his hands, then he wouldn't be able to resist no matter what she did later. She raised her small face. There was a very pleased with herself smile on her face. "Why can't I? Big brother, didn't you say you would do whatever I wanted?"

The young girl didn't realize she was lighting a fire. She straddled Zhao Jie's waist and lightly patted his cheek, "Big brother, smile for me."

Zhao Jie looked at her with burning eyes.

Wei Luo didn't care if he was smiling or not. Her fingers slowly stroked the outline of his cheeks. When she reached his thin lips, she rubbed his lips for a while before her soft, white fingers separated his lips and slipped into his mouth without any fears.



Zhao Jie gently held her fingers with his teeth. His gaze was like a bright torch.

Right after that, Wei Luo saw him exerting his strength and easily breaking apart the belt that she had used to tie his hands.

Wei Luo stared at the fragmented pieces of cloth. Before she could react, she felt her vision spinning and she was pressed underneath Zhao Jie's body.

Wei Luo's eyes opened wider in astonishment.

Zhao Jie leaned over and bit down on her smooth neck. He hoarsely said, "It's my turn to play with you."

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Next morning, Wei Luo felt as if her waist was going to break in half.

The consequence of lighting a fire was that the raging inferno had reached her body and almost burned her to ashes. Zhao Jie was really too much. He had clearly said she could play as she wanted, but he still did what he pleased at the end! Wei Luo rubbed her waist and rolled farther away inside the bed. She wanted to be far away from this starving wolf. She would never trust his words again.

As a result, when Zhao Jie opened his eyes, he saw a young girl hiding from him and her eyes were gleaming with tears. Her dudou was loosely hanging on her body and her neck and shoulders were full of blemishes. A glance would show that she had been fiercely tormented. Zhao Jie's eyes deepened. His hand stretched out to bring Wei Luo closer, then he pressed her beneath him and fiercely tormented her once again.

Wei Luo wouldn't say a single word to him even after he came back from practicing martial arts in the courtyard.

He waited until after Wei Luo finished her bath and was sitting in front of the bronze mirror having her hair brushed. He took the

comb from Jin Lu's hand and continued brushing her hair. He didn't forget to lower his voice as he asked, "Did you have fun playing?"

Wei Luo threw a hairpin with golden wires twisted to form a grasshopper sitting on a blade of grass down onto the dressing table. Then, she turned around, glared at him, and said, "Big fat liar!"

Zhao Jie smiled, "How did I lie to you?"

"You clearly said..." Wei Luo was utterly flustered and exasperated. Right after she stood up, her waist and legs felt weak, so she ended up falling down to sit again. Since she had lost her imposing manner and there were so many servant girls watching them, it wouldn't be good for her to mention their agreement. Wei Luo's eyes turned red. A long time later, she finally squeezed out the words, "Go sleep in the study tonight."

This was a big deal. Zhao Jie finally realized the seriousness of the situation. He sent Jin Lu, Bai Lan, Yun Gua, and Yu Suo away from the room, then he carried Wei Luo onto his lap, rubbed her waist, and tried coaxing her.

Fifteen minutes later, Wei Luo's residual anger hadn't disappeared. She stretched her hand out and scratched his neck. "This is completely your fault. I was planning on going out today. How can I go out like this?" She didn't even have the strength to stand up.

Zhao Jie took hold of her hand and held her fingertips in his mouth. "Where did you want to go?"

Wei Luo said, "Yang Zhen is returning to the capital today. I promised Liuli that I would go with her to Emerald Restaurant to look."

Emerald Restaurant's private rooms would have an excellent and clear viewpoint of the army when they returned to capital.

Zhao Jie hesitantly said, “I’ll arrange for a carriage to bring you over there.”

Wei Luo nodded her head in agreement. This was her only option.

After Wei Luo changed her clothes and was going out, Zhao Jie was coincidentally also leaving the residence to go to Shen Ji Barracks, so they left the residence together. Zhao Jie supported Wei Luo’s waist the entire way there. Only a fool wouldn’t be able to tell what had happened. His action annoyed Wei Luo to death. She kept pushing his hand away. His action revealed what she wanted to hide! Unfortunately, Zhao Jie was thick-skinned and her resistance was futile.

Only one morning has passed before most of their servants knew that the prince had fiercely loved the princess consort last night.

## Chapter 152.3

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When Wei Luo arrived at a private room in Emerald Restaurant, Zhao Liuli had already been waiting for a long time.

Zhao Liuli was currently leaning out the window to look. The army hadn't passed the capital's moat yet, but she was already impatient enough that her neck was extended past the window frame.

Wei Luo asked, "How did you get Her Majesty to allow you to come outside?"

Zhao Liuli said matter-of-factly, "Imperial father has been pestering imperial mother every day and she hasn't been able to get away, so she hasn't been watching over me as much."

Zhao Liuli's words didn't seem improbable. Wei Luo thought of how attentive and solicitous Emperor Chong Zhen had been toward Empress Chen on that day.

About an hour later, the army that had put down a revolt slowly came through the capital's gate and the common people enthusiastically welcomed them. Multitude of people came out from everywhere to celebrate. This time, the army had put down the armed rebellion and saved Guang Dong's common people. Since ancient times, it was always easy to feel respectful towards heroes. The common people were lined up in the streets to welcome the army.

Wei Luo and Zhao Liulie saw Yang Zhen sitting on a horse from a distance.

He had obtained first class merit by capturing the rebel army's leader alive and had advanced from an insignificant garrison guard to a second-ranked commander. Only a few months had past, but it seemed as if he had changed his face. He had become thinner and his skin had darkened, but he also looked more mature and

radiated a heroic aura with his imposing appearance. Yang Zhen was wearing silver-white body armor and a helmet and riding on a Qinghai horse.

(T/N: Qinghai is one of China's northwest provinces.)

Zhao Liuli clutched Wei Luo's hand and her eyes didn't even know how to move anymore. "Ah Luo, I... I saw older brother Yang Zhen."

Wei Luo felt that the situation was very humorous, glanced her, and said, "Don't cry."

To be honest, Zhao Liuli actually did want to cry a little bit.

As Yang Zhen rode past the window, he felt something and raised his head up to look. His eyes met Zhao Liuli's eyes.

Suddenly startled, Yang Zhen even forgot how to ride a horse. He stopped in place.

The two of them looked at each other. She looked at him and he looked at her. Only three months had passed, but it felt as if they hadn't seen each other in three years.

Finally, someone from behind urged, "Sir Yang, why did you stop?"

Yang Zhen returned to his senses. He took a long look upstairs, then he urged the horse forward.

When the army had walked far away, Zhao Liuli pulled Wei Luo's hand to go outside. "They're going back to the barracks. Let's go there too."

Wei Luo was really pitiful. Her waist and legs felt sore, but she still had to scoot about with Liuli.

A carriage was parked behind Emerald Restaurant. It was the carriage that Zhao Jie had arranged for Wei Luo. The two of them took the carriage to the barracks. Because they were dressed too conspicuously and the barracks were full of rough men, it wouldn't

be good for them to enter. So, they could only wait at the entrance.

An hour later, Yang Zhen and the other military officers came out of the barracks.

It wouldn't be good for Zhao Liuli to show her face, so she could only sneakily lift up a corner of the curtain. She wanted to wait until everyone else had left and give Yang Zhen a surprise.

By chance, she heard their conversation.

One of the people fawningly said, "We captured many prisoners while putting down the revolt. It's all thanks to Sir Yang's effort."

She hadn't seen Yang Zhen in a while, but he didn't change much and still had a reticent temperament. It was only that the bloody nature of battle had sharpened his tenaciousness. He only said, "Without everyone working together, I wouldn't have been victorious by myself."

The over-the-top bootlicker wasn't discouraged. He had probably seen stubborn people like Yang Zhen. "Some of the captured prisoners are first-rate beauties from Guang Dong. Sir, you stayed in the south for a few months. You probably experienced the delicate and exquisite women there. These prisoners are the highest quality. They're voluptuous beauties with snowy white skin. Sir, if you like, this subordinate can send them over for you to taste."

Men, who had lived in the barracks for a long time, spoke about vulgar topics without any scruples or hesitation.

Inside the carriage, Zhao Liuli's smile gradually dimmed.

Yang Zhen said, "No need. I have other matters to attend to. I'll be leaving for now."

But, that military officer wouldn't let him go. He blocked Yang Zhen's path. "Sir Yang, wait. At least look at them first..."

As it turned out, soldiers had already brought two of the captives

over. They were two plainly dressed young women. It seemed like this had already been prepared in advance. Although the two young women were dressed simply, their clothes were very clean and their hair was combed into two glossy braids. Their appearances were pretty good and they seemed to only be fourteen to fifteen years old with inexperienced appearances. They had probably suffered a lot of torment on the way to the capital. When they saw Yang Zhen, they were somewhat afraid and obediently called out, “Sir Yang...”

That military officer thought Yang Zhen was bored of pampered seductress and would definitely be interested in these two timid, young women. Unexpectedly, Yang Zhen furrowed his eyebrows and said, “Sir Zhou...”

Before he could finish speaking, a carriage curtain was suddenly lifted up from the carriage across from them. A small, beautifully adorned face was revealed. Zhao Liuli angrily said to the driver, “Return to the palace!”

Yang Zhen turned his head to follow the sound of the voice and was shocked stiff at the sight of the exquisite girl. For a moment, he thought he was seeing a mirage.

Previously, the domed umbrella-like roof carriage had stopped at the barracks’ entrance with its curtain hanging down. Yang Zhen and the others had thought the carriage belonged to one of the other officer’s family. But when the curtain was lifted up, it had been the person he had been missing day and night.

He didn’t recover from his shock until the carriage had turned around and traveled far away. He hurriedly jumped onto a nearby fine horse and urged it forward.

# Chapter 153.1

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The carriage wasn't as fast as a well-trained warhorse. Yang Zhen quickly caught up to the domed umbrella-like carriage.

Yang Zhen stopped his horse in the carriage's path and looked at the light green curtain embroidered with golden thread.

The driver quickly tightened the reins and hurriedly called out to stop the carriage's horse.

"Your Highness, did you come here to see me?" Yang Zhen slowly and quietly asked. A curtain separated them.

Zhao Liuli was very angry at the moment. When she heard these words, teardrops fell from her eyes. She didn't know who she was angry with. Was she angry with Yang Zhen and those two captives? Or, was she angry about the words that Sir Zhou had said? Although Yang Zhen hadn't accepted those two young women, he had been in Guang Dong for so long. Who knows if he had touched other women or not? Moreover, Sir Zhou had said that all of the women in Guang Dong were beautiful. What if Yang Zhen hadn't been able to stop himself from having an affair with another woman? As soon as she thought of this, Zhao Liuli felt even worse. She used her fingertips to wipe away her tears.

Without lifting the curtain, she told the driver, "Who told you to stop? I want to return to the palace."

The driver didn't dare to disobey her order. He could only raise the reins to direct the horse to go around Yang Zhen and continue going down the road.

However, just as the carriage past by Yang Zhen, he leaned his body over and seized the reins from the driver's hands. Using only a little bit force, he steadily stopped the carriage on the road.

Zhao Liuli felt the carriage stumbling and was finally willing to lift the curtain to see Yang Zhen. "I said I want to go back to the



palace.”

Yang Zhen didn't move. His eyes were stuck on her small, delicate face as if he couldn't see enough of it.

Zhao Liuli was a princess after all. When she decided to act lofty, she wasn't the slightest bit lacking. She asked, “Have you decided to not listen to my words anymore?”

Yang Zhen looked at her and persistently asked, “Your Highness, did you come here to see me?”

Zhao Liuli's eyes turned red. She turned her head away and said, “I didn't. I just passed by here with Ah Luo.”

Who would pass by the barracks' entrance without any reason? Yang Zhen kept silent. His hands were tightly clenched around the carriage's reins as he stared at Zhao Liuli. He had recently seen her at Emerald Restaurant. In that single moment, his agitated heart had finally calmed down. In the past three months, there had only been one thought in his mind. Accomplish meritorious service so that he could return to marry Liuli. He had treated himself as an ice-cold blade. He never felt tired as he went with the other soldiers to put down the revolt without stopping to sleep or rest. It was only when he saw Zhao Liuli that he felt he was a human that could feel happiness, anger, sorrow, and joy and be concerned about emotions. He had done all of this for her.

Zhao Liuli saw that he wasn't responding and looked at the reins that he was holding. She ordered, “Let go.”

Instead of listening to her words, Yang Zhen leaned over, wrapped his arm around her waist, and overbearingly carried her onto his horse.

Zhao Liuli widened her eyes in surprise. She wanted to get off the horse. “What are you doing?”

Yang Zhen tightly held onto her waist and wouldn't let her move. “I have words I want to say to Your Highness.”

Then, he pulled on the reins and the horse ran towards the forest.

Wei Luo watched this entertaining show from beginning to end. Just as she was considering whether or not to sneak into the forest to continue watching, she heard the sound of horses from outside. Wei Luo lifted up the curtain and she saw a group of people riding horses towards her. Zhao Jie was at the front of the group. He pulled on the reins and steadily stopped in front of her.

Wei Luo asked in surprise, “Why are you here?”

Zhao Jie carried her onto the horse, pinched her waist, and asked, “I should be the one asking you. Why did you come here?”

As Wei Luo sat on Zhao Jie’s horse, the soldiers, who wearing silver zhao jia armor and had been riding behind Zhao Jie, got off from their horses and saluted her one after another.

“Liuli wanted to come here to see Yang Zhen, so I came here with her.” Wei Luo moved closer to Zhao Jie and asked, “These people are?”

Zhao Jie said, “These are all people from Shen Ji Barracks. After I finished my work, I heard that you came to the barracks and was worried that a mishap might happen, so I brought them with me.”

Wei Luo nodded after hearing his answer. She look towards the forest and said, “Big brother, nothing will happen to Liuli right?”

This forest seems strangely overgrown as if no one had entered it in a long time.

Zhao Jie narrowed his eyes. He knew about Yang Zhen and Zhao Liuli’s relationship. Previously, he had looked the other way because he believed that Yang Zhen was skilled and would definitely become a great talent one day. But right now, he had kidnapped his younger sister in broad daylight. His courage was too excessive. He ordered two people from Shen Ji Barracks, “You two, stay here and keep guard. When Yang Zhen comes out, escort

him to see this prince.”

The two of them acknowledged their order in unison.

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In the depths of the forest, Zhao Liuli felt they had run very far. But, Yang Zhen didn't seem to have any intention of stopping. The surrounding trees became denser and denser. The trees hid the sky and covered the earth in a disorderly mess. The sound of the horse's hooves running over the soil sounded exceptionally clear. The surrounding environment was so quiet that she could even hear the sound of a babbling brook. It was if they were the only two people left in this vast world and only the sound of their breathing remained.

The tears in Zhao Liuli's eyes had dried up and most of her anger was gone. But, she continued to show a taut expression. She wasn't willing to be the one that gave in first.

Yang Zhen eventually stopped at a clear stream. The spring water made a tinkling sound as the stream zigzagged down from the hilltop. The water was so clean that they could clearly see their inverted image in the water. Yang Zhen slowly moved along with the stream. When Zhao Liuli unintentionally lowered her head, she saw two people reflected in the water. A tall, valiant man was holding a slender, delicate girl. Yang Zhen's arm was placed over her waist and their close embrace was very intimate.

Zhao Liuli's cheeks turned red. She looked away, but she couldn't resist sneaking glances of Yang Zhen's reflection. He had changed a lot. He was previously a reticent young man. Now, he was a silent and composed man. Zhao Liuli was spellbound by his reflection, but then she thought of that previous scene and couldn't help pursing her lips. He had experienced the taste of young women, so of course he had become a man.

Her heart felt unwell once she thought of this.

Seeing her lowered head, Yang Zhen didn't know what she was thinking. He looked at the top of her head as he tried to figure out what to say to coax her. He had never been an eloquent speaker. Before he could think of something, Zhao Liuli said, "Older brother Yang Zhen, if you met someone that you like in Guang Dong, then just marry her. We're not fated to be together anyways."

Yang Zhen's arm tightened and his body slightly trembled. He hoarsely said, "I didn't touch any woman in Guang Dong." He didn't want to marry another woman. He only wanted to marry her.

Zhao Liuli still didn't look at him. Her head was drooped as she said, "You told me to marry someone else in that letter."

She clutched the horse's mane as she sulkily said, "Didn't you have the intention of parting ways? If I marry someone else, then it'll be convenient for you to marry another girl." The more she spoke, the more likely this possibility seemed.

Feeling wronged, she rashly said, "That's fine. Imperial mother is helping me select a husband. There are many candidates with good moral conduct and family backgrounds. If I agree, imperial mother will quickly arrange a marriage for me."

Parting ways. Selecting a husband.

After hearing these words, Yang Zhen turned Zhao Liuli around and tightly hugged her against his chest. He hoarsely said, "You can't." Select another husband.

## Chapter 153.2

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Zhao Liuli felt as if her body was going to be snapped in half by him. How did his hands become so strong after going to Guang Dong? The young princess blinked. Still feeling angry, she asked, “Why can’t I? Someone even recently gave you two captured slaves. I saw them. They look very beautiful. You already have other women. Why do I have to continue obediently stay with you?”

Yang Zhen awkwardly explained, “I didn’t accept them.”

Zhao Liuli leaned against his chest and heard the sound of his beating heart. It didn’t seem to match his calm expression at all. “Did you have other women in Guang Dong?”

Yang Zhen seemed to want to absorb her into his body, “I didn’t.”

Zhao Liuli raised her head to look at him, but she could only see his firm chin and his blade-sharp silhouette. She couldn’t see his eyes. “Then, did you think about me?”

Yang Zhen hugged her without speaking. The longing that he felt for her couldn’t be clearly expressed by words.

Of course, he missed her. He was only able to pass every life-threatening moment because he was thinking of her.

But, Zhao Liuli wouldn’t wait to hear his answer. She angrily pushed him away and prepared to jump down from the horse. “Never mind then. I want to go back. Let go of me.”

How could Yang Zhen be willing to let her go? He held her by the waist to prevent her from jumping down from the horse. He said, “I thought about you.”

Zhao Liuli was unwilling to easily forgive him. “How much did you think about me?”

Yang Zhen silently looked at her with his pitch-black eyes as if there was something brewing inside of him. Before Zhao Liuli could react, he held her small face and swooped down to kiss her. Their lips seemed glued together. Right now, Yang Zhen didn't care about adhering to the etiquette between a princess and her subject. After touching Zhao Liuli's lips, he impatiently rushed in. He hadn't tasted her for so long and he couldn't stop once he started. Yang Zhen was remarkably like a wild wolf that had been hungry for a long time. Once he seized this small, white rabbit, he devoured it with all his energy. The sound of their kisses was so loud that Zhao Liuli blushed as she heard the sound.

A long time later, Zhao Liuli's mouth and tongue had already become numb. Their transparent saliva slid down her lower jaws. Yang Zhen continued to linger over her lips, then he lowered his head and licked her chin clean of saliva.

Yang Zhen's burning hot palm held her waist as he whispered into her ear, "I thought about you this much."

Zhao Liuli's face was thoroughly red. She bit her bottom lip, but it only tasted of him.

The young princess's gaze moved about. Her hopeful eyes were dazzling. She was much more obedient after being fiercely kissed and didn't mention that she wanted to return to the palace.

Yang Zhen required a great deal of self-control to restrain his emotions and stop his hands from violating her. He said, "Liuli, don't marry someone else."

Zhao Liuli wrapped her arms around his waist and buried her face into his sturdy chest. "You were the one that wrote those words in the letter."

Yang Zhen paused. Then, he said, "I wrote the letter when I was injured and my life was in peril." Actually, he regretted writing the letter as soon he finished writing it.

Zhao Liuli finally remembered the other parts of the letter now. She hurriedly raised her head, “What about now? Is your injury okay now?”

Yang Zhen nodded. He lifted her hand and placed it on the left side of his chest. “It’s mostly recovered. It’s okay now.”

Because he didn’t want to hide anything from her, he told Zhao Liuli the story of how he got injured.

When their side had attacked the rebel army led by its leader, the opposing group had surrounded Yang Zhen. While Yang Zhen was heavily outnumbered, he received a arrow wound to his chest. The arrow had struck only half an inch from his heart. Moreover, the tip of the arrow had been soaked in poison and Yang Zhen remained unconscious. A few doctors had watched over him for two days and two nights before they were able to save his life. He really thought he wouldn’t be able to survive.

Zhao Jie had coincidentally sent people to inquire about him at this time, so that was why he had written that sentence in the letter before he fell unconscious.

But, he had regretted his words right after he finished writing the letter. He couldn’t bear to give Zhao Liuli to someone else. Thus, he relied on his mental strength and unexpectedly woke up. On the third day, his fever diminished. The doctors all said that his recovery had been a miracle.

Even now, his wound wasn’t completely healed even though the poison had been removed. But, Yang Zhen didn’t tell this part to Zhao Liuli.

He had downplayed what had happened, but Zhao Liuli knew that he must have suffered unendurable pain. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have written those words. “Let me see your injury.” She couldn’t let go of her worries.

Yang Zhen held her hand and said, “Really, it’s fine.”

How could Zhao Liuli believe to his words? The two of them came down from the horse and she pressed him down on a flat, smooth stone by the side of the stream. She opened his robe to examine his injury.

Yang Zhen stared at her as she did this. He seemed helpless, but there was a hidden smile in his eyes.

Zhao Liuli immediately saw the frightful-looking scar. The wound had only recently scabbed. There were crisscrossing marks left on the flesh from the doctors cleaning out the poison from the injury. Her heart felt pained as she saw this sight. She touched the newly healed over flesh and asked, “Does it hurt?”

Yang Zhen shook his head.

Yang Zhen had several other deep and shallow scars on his body in addition to the scar on his chest. There were new scars and old scars. Zhao Liuli glared at him in dissatisfaction. “Older brother Yang Zhen is still young. Look at these scars. How are you taking care of yourself? Don't you value your life?” If something had happened to him and he didn't return, what would she do?

Yang Zhen closed his robes and took her into his arms. “I'll be more careful in the future.”

Zhao Liuli sniffled and obediently cuddled into his embrace. Never mind, everything was fine as long as he came back. She would take care of him in the future.

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It was a harmonious spring day and the Japanese roses and peonies in the back garden had blossomed into flowers. Wei Luo wanted to make new rouge, so she called Jin Lu and Bai Lan to her side and carried a colorful, flower bowl to the back garden to pick flower petals.

Yang Zhen had come to the residence an hour ago. He and Zhao Jie were currently having a conversation in the study.



After Wei Luo had picked half a bowl of peony petals, she had Jin Lu bring a copper basin of purified water. Then, she poured the petals into the basin to begin washing the flower petals.

An hour later, Wei Luo finished washing the flower petals and was starting to lay out the petals underneath the sunlight to dry them.

Zhao Jie had finished discussing his work. When he returned to their bedroom, he found out that Wei Luo was in the back garden drying flower petals, so he walked over there.

Wei Luo was kneeling on the bamboo mat laid out next to the flowerbed. She picked up a flower petal and put it into her mouth. After she tasted it, her bright, black eyes turned and she said to Jin Lu, "Go and bring back more honey and mica."

Jin Lu acknowledged the order. When she turned around to leave and saw Zhao Jie, she hurriedly saluted, "Your Highness."

Hearing Jin Lu's voice, Wei Luo turned her head and asked, "Did you finish talking with Yang Zhen?"

Zhao Jie walked to her side, grasped her white wrist, and lifted it up. He lowered his head and licked the flower nectar from her fingertips. He asked a question in reply, "Do flower petals taste good?"

Wei Luo blinked, "They taste pure and sweet."

"Let me taste them too." As he said this, his left hand moved to the back of Wei Luo's head and not allowing any resistance, he kissed down.

After he pried open her lips and teeth and tasted everything inside and out, he finally commented, "It's not as tasty as milky egg soup."

Wei Luo pushed him away, pursed her lips, and said, "Bai Lan is still here."

But when she turned her head, she saw that Bai Lan had already discreetly walked away with Jin Lu.

# Chapter 154.1

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Wei Luo had originally thought that Zhao Liuli and Yang Zhen's matter would be thus settled. However, there was an unforeseen event two days later.

Emperor Chong Zhen was in a very good mood because Yang Zhen had ended the revolt and captured the rebel army's leader alive. He summoned Yang Zhen and personally asked what he wanted as his reward. Yang Zhen audaciously said he wanted to marry sixth princess Zhao Liuli in front of the emperor and the entire imperial court. Although this request went against everyone's expectations, it wasn't too outrageous. If the emperor agreed, this matter might even become a great, praiseworthy conversational topic.

However, the emperor surprisingly not only didn't agree, he also suddenly flew into a terrible rage and ordered for Yang Zhen to be beaten by a military rod thirty times!

When a group of people brought Yang Zhen into Prince Jing's residences through a corner gate, Wei Luo was currently eating an orange dessert that Jin Lu had just finished preparing. Hearing Yang Zhen's news, her first reaction was shock. Soon after, she left the orange dessert behind to go over there to look.

Yang Zhen's face had become deathly pale and his mind wasn't clear. Those thirty strikes wasn't much to him, but his chest wound had been reopened during the beating and a lot of blood had bled out. Steward Wang hurriedly ordered a servant to bring a doctor over to examine Yang Zhen's wounds.

Wei Luo pulled Zhao Jie's sleeve. Confused, she asked, "Why did you bring Yang Zhen to our home?"

Zhao Jie used his thumb to wipe away the orange dessert from the corner of her mouth and said, "Yang Zhen doesn't have a home, so Liuli asked me to bring him here. It'll be more

convenient for him to recuperate from his injury staying here.”

Wei Luo understood.

On the southwest part of Prince Jing’s residence, there was a courtyard called Zheng Rong Courtyard. It was a quiet and secluded place with a good environment and would be a suitable place for recuperating, so Wei Luo arranged for Yang Zhen to stay in that courtyard.

The doctor soon arrived and went inside the room to treat Yang Zhen’s injuries.

Wei Luo and Zhao Jie were standing in the outside courtyard. Wei Luo asked, “Why did His Majesty become angry?”

Zhao Jie leaned against the verandah’s pillar with his arms crossed and thoughtfully said, “Someone must have said something to him.”

Wei Luo couldn’t stop herself from pondering after hearing his answer. Very few people knew about Yang Zhen and Zhao Liuli’s relationship. Who could have told Emperor Chong Zhen?

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On the next day, Zhao Jie got to the bottom of this matter.

As it turns out, an imperial doctor had seen Zhao Liuli went she went to look for Yang Zhen at the barracks a few days ago. The doctor’s name was Zhou Hang and worked for the Ministry of Appointments. Zhou Hang had seen Zhao Liuli at palace banquets, so he was able to recognize her identity. When he returned home, he had mentioned this matter to his wife. He said Princess Tianji seemed to know a man from the barracks. That madam wasn’t an easy person to deal with. When she went to the palace, she spoke of this matter in front of everyone. The people there didn’t believe her words. After all, Empress Chen treated Zhao Liuli like a precious treasure. Princess Tianji wasn’t even allowed to leave the palace, how could she have met a man from the outside?

Zhao Lin Lang was the only one that kept these words at the back of her mind.

Her brother, Zhao Zhang, had been confined and her mother, Noble Consort Ning, had died. Zhao Lin Lang hated Empress Chen to the core of her bones. But, she was only a princess and she didn't have the power to change anything. Seeing this tiny opportunity, she had to seize it and not let it go. She was very lucky. She was able to find out that when Yang Zhen was Zhao Liuli's guard, they had a secret relationship. Zhao Lin Lang wrote letters to Zhao Zhang to discuss the matter and decided to tell Emperor Chong Zhen this information to gain the initiative by striking first.

Harboring selfish motives, Zhao Lin Lan described their relationship with rather extreme words such as "illicit relations before marriage" and "pledging to marry without parents' approval".

After Emperor Chong Zhen heard these words, his expression immediately changed. Shocked, he hastily ordered people to secretly investigate this matter. However, before the matter could be clearly investigated, Yang Zhen had said those words in the imperial court and unintentionally confirmed that there was something between him and Zhao Liuli.

As a result, Emperor Chong Zhen became extremely furious.

Actually, if he had heard Yang Zhen and Zhao Liuli's explanation first, he might not have been as angry. Unfortunately, he had heard Zhao Lin Lang's provoking words first. The first impression was naturally the strongest, so his frame of mind was different when he looked at these two children.

As a guard, Yang Zhen's duty was to ensure the princess's safety. But, he had used his position and proximity to induce Zhao Liuli into having feelings for him. From this, the emperor could see that he was a two-faced, vile person that harbored evil intentions. He definitely couldn't entrust the rest of Liuli's life to him.

Not only did Emperor Chong Zhen penalize Yang Zhen, he also forbid Zhao Liuli from taking a step out of Chen Hua Hall.

Consequently, it was an extremely difficult task for Zhao Liuli to meet with Yang Zhen. She could only secretly write a letter to ask Wei Luo to persuade Yang Zhen to focus on recuperating from his injuries.

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Several days later, Emperor Chong's anger still hadn't dissipated yet and he wasn't willing to forgive Zhao Liuli or Yang Zhen.

As for Yang Zhen, he hadn't spoken a single word since entering Prince Jing's residence.

Today, the servant girls brought over Yang Zhen's medicine as usual. After Wei Luo witnessed him drinking down the medicine, she couldn't resist sighing and saying, "Yang Zhen, are you planning on staying like this and doing nothing?"

Yang Zhen finally showed a reaction. He put down the brightly colored bowl that had a pattern of lingzhi mushrooms and narcissus flowers and looked at Wei Luo with his calm, dark eyes.

During the past several days, he always had this expression. He frequently looked out the window with an indifferent expression as if he had lost the will to live.

It was good as long as he showed some reaction. Wei Luo let out a sigh in relief. She was worried that he would be unable to recover after this setback. "Don't you have other methods if His Majesty won't agree to let you marry Liuli? I heard that His Majesty has been looking for a husband for Liuli recently and has chosen Duke Ding's family's Gao Cong Xun. Are you just going to watch as she marries someone else?"

Yang Zhen's pupils shrank and the hand underneath the quilt gradually clenched into a fist. He hoarsely said, "Liuli belongs to me."

He was finally willing to speak. Wei Luo stood by his bed with her lips slightly curved as she overlooked him. “Oh, on what basis can you use to say that Liuli belongs to you?” Her hands were behind her back as she straightforwardly said, “What have you done for Liuli? From the beginning to the end, I’ve only seen Liuli trying her best by herself while you stay here with your remorse. Even though Liuli is confined, she still wrote a letter to me to ask me to care of you. What about you? Are you going to continue to cowardly avoid taking action?”

Yang Zhen fiercely raised his head and looked at her with a burning gaze.

Wei Luo didn’t avoid his gaze.

A long time later, Yang Zhen said in a quiet voice, “There’s no need for you to say words to incite me.”

Her intention had been discovered. Wei Luo touched her nose. She seemed rather embarrassed that her scheme had been exposed.

Actually, Yang Zhen wasn’t as cowardly as she had said. He had been properly recuperating from his injuries during the past several days. She heard from the servant girls that he would practice martial arts every morning, then he would ride a horse to visit the barracks. Although Emperor Chong Zhen was angry, he didn’t take away his official position. Yang Zhen was still a second-ranked commander.

Wei Luo asked, “What are your plans for the future?”

Yang Zhen sat up on the bed, leaned over to put on his shoes, and gave an answer that was beside the point. “I won’t give up.” He paused before saying, “Your Highness, thank you for the care you and the prince have given me during the past several days. Yang Zhen will remember your kindness as long as I live.”

Wei Luo said, “As long as you don’t disappoint Liuli’s hopes, I wouldn’t mind saving you another hundred times.”

Yang Zhen said, “I won’t.” After saying this, he left the room in large strides.

Really, the amount of words he said was pitifully small. She really didn’t understand why Liuli liked him. Wei Luo held onto the doorframe for a long time while she puzzled over this question, until she heard Zhao Jie’s voice.

“Ah Luo, if you keep looking in that direction, this prince will have him leave the residence by tomorrow.”



## Chapter 154.2

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Wei Luo turned around and saw Zhao Jie wearing a dark reddish purple robe with a Taotie pattern. He was standing only a few steps away.

Wei Luo threw herself into Zhao Jie's arms, wrapped her arms around his waist, raised her head, and said, "Yang Zhen isn't as good-looking as big brother. It's enough just to look at big brother."

Zhao Jie clearly knew that she was deliberately saying these words to curry his favor, but he still felt delighted. He pinched her small cheeks and said, "Little rascal, what were you two talking about? You've been very diligent about coming to Zheng Rong Courtyard every day."

Wei Luo didn't answer and only wrinkled her nose. She leaned against Zhao Jie's chest like a puppy and sniffed his body's scent.

Zhao Jie said, "What's wrong?"

Wei Luo deliberately said in an exaggerated way, "Such a strong vinegar scent."

(T/N: In Chinese, eating vinegar means you're being jealous of your lover.)

Zhao Jie picked her up and repeatedly patted her butt. "Little fellow, you're asking for a beating."

Wei Luo had already experienced his slaps. After he had only spanked her once last time, it hurt so much that she didn't dare to sit on a stool for an entire evening. She obediently wrapped her arms around Zhao Jie's neck and rubbed her face between his shoulder and neck. She meekly said, "I'm only taking care of Yang Zhen because Liuli asked me. Otherwise, I wouldn't pay attention to him."

After she said these words, Zhao Jie's expression improved.

She hurriedly kissed him to strike while the iron was hot. “I only care about you.”

Zhao Jie pinched her chin and wouldn't let her move away. He sucked on her lips to taste them for a long time.

Wei Luo was heavily breathing when he let her go and her face was flushed red. “Where did you go before you came here?”

Zhao Jie said, “The palace.”

At the mention of this, Wei Luo remembered a serious matter and solemnly asked, “Did you see His Majesty? What did he say?”

Zhao Jie didn't go to the palace for Zhao Liuli. He had gone to discuss the drought in Qing Zhou. Qing Zhou had been suffering from a drought for over half a year and the bad harvest this year had led to the absolute suffering of the common people. Emperor Chong Zhen had given this matter to Zhao Jie to handle. Zhao Jie had gone to the palace today to deliberate over decreasing Qing Zhou's taxation. Afterwards, Zhao Jie had mentioned Zhao Liuli's matter. Right after he spoke, Emperor Chong Zhen angry expression showed that he didn't want to talk about this matter. And so, Zhao Jie didn't continue this topic and left the palace.

Zhao Jie said, “Let's wait a few days and talk about this after imperial father calms down.”

Wei Luo was expecting this answer. She helplessly sighed. “I'll be going to the palace to pay respects to imperial mother tomorrow. While I'm there, I'll ask imperial mother for her opinion.” She suddenly thought of something and her almond-shaped eyes narrowed as a light flashed through her eyes. “Seventh princess has so much free time. She even had time to interfere with this matter.”

If it weren't for Zhao Lin Lang, there wouldn't be any difficulties.

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On the next day, Wei Luo went to the palace after tidying up and

changing her outfit.

Wei Luo knew that Empress Chen liked to eat these common people snacks, so she specially brought several types of sweets from a new confection shop on West Street on her way to palace. Included in these sweets, there were two of Empress Chen's favorites, candied winter melon and hawthorn cake.

When she arrived at Zhao Yang Hall, a palace servant said Empress Chen was chanting sutras at Bao He Hall. Wei Luo left the desserts at Zhao Yang Hall and turned around to go to Bao He Hall.

Wei Luo knew that this meant Empress Chen was feeling troubled.

Whenever Empress Chen was feeling unhappy or unsure about something, she would go to Bao He Hall to chant sutras.

When Wei Luo arrived, there were only two servant girls waiting outside. Empress Chen was kneeling on a praying mat as she endlessly muttered sutras.

Hearing footsteps, Empress Chen furrowed her eyebrows and said, "Didn't this empress order that no one should enter here?"

Wei Luo said, "Imperial mother, it's me."

Empress Chen was slightly surprised, but she didn't stand up. She continued to kneel on the praying mat as she said, "Ah Luo, why did you come here?"

Wei Luo kneeled down on the neighboring praying mat, and put her palms together, and piously closed her eyes. Like the empress, she believed that the gods and Buddha existed in this world. Otherwise, she wouldn't have been reborn again. She said, "I brought several kinds of common people's confections for imperial mother. I don't know if imperial mother will like them."

After Empress Chen finished reciting a sutra, she tilted her head to look at her and said with a smile, "That's very thoughtful of you."

Wei Luo said, "These confections are from a recently opened store. Imperial mother, try them later. If you like them, I'll have them delivered to you every day." Her words were sweet and made Empress Chen very happy.

A while later, Wei Luo couldn't resist asking, "Imperial mother, do you also disagree with Liuli marrying Yang Zhen?"

Empress Chen had already guessed why Wei Luo had come here. Her previous words were just camouflage for why she was here. It must have been difficult of her to resist asking this question first. Empress Chen stood up from the praying mat, walked to a small, vermilion-lacquered table carved with a cloud pattern, sat down, and poured two cups of tea. "When I started looking for a husband for that child, she had used various excuses to avoid marriage. I had thought she truly didn't want to marry anyone and wanted to stay at this empress's side forever. I didn't expect that her heart already had someone." Her voice sounded rather wistful.

Wei Luo didn't make a sound and obediently sat down across from Empress Chen.

Empress Chen continued, "You probably already knew about this for a long time. You two worked together to deceive this empress, right?"

Wei Luo hurriedly shook her head and explained, "I also only recently found out about this. When Yang Zhen went to Guang Dong, Liuli decided that she would confess to you after Yang Zhen came back. That's why I didn't say anything to you." At this time, it was harmless to tell a little lie.

Empress Chen's expression slightly eased and she slowly said, "I just want Liuli to marry a person that sincerely loves her and will take care of her. I want her life to be harmonious and sweet. As long as she doesn't experience any turbulent times, I'll be satisfied as her mother."

When she had been looking for a husband for Liuli, the

candidates all had one common point, not ambitious. Empress Chen liked people that were satisfied with what they had. Once men became too ambitious, they were likely to neglect their wives. She had already tastes this bitterness herself; she didn't want her daughter to follow her disastrous path.

Wei Luo said, "Imperial mother, you don't have to worry about this point. Yang Zhen's affection for Liuli is absolutely sincere. He's not doing this for her princess status."

Wei Luo gave a few examples. Minor examples were carving things and catching fireflies for Liuli. A major demonstration was rushing to join the army to put down the revolt in Guang Dong for Liuli. Each of these examples conveyed Yang Zhen's genuineness.

After Empress Chen heard this, she was naturally slightly moved. She sighed and said, "It's not obvious, but Yang Zhen is truly an infatuated child."

Wei Luo nodded in agreement. "Then, will you agree to their marriage?"

Empress Chen said with a smile, "So what if I agree? There's nothing I can do if His Majesty doesn't agree."

Even though she said these words, Emperor Chong Zhen would definitely listen to her.

Wei Luo had heard for Zhao Liuli that Emperor Chong Zhen would listen and follow Empress Chen's words without any regard for his dignity. He was as flattering to Empress Chen as a concubine towards her master. He did all this in hopes of obtaining Empress Chen's forgiveness.

Unfortunately for him, Empress Chen didn't appreciate his actions at all.

## Chapter 154.3

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Wei Luo talked with Empress Chen for a while longer. After seeing that it wasn't early anymore by the color of the sky, she stood up and bid farewell.

Just as she reached the doorway, Empress Chen called out, "Ah Luo."

Wei Luo politely turned around and asked, "Imperial mother?"

Empress Chen warmly looked at her and sincerely and earnestly said, "You and Chang Sheng have been married for a while. Have you thought about having children yet?"

At first, Wei Luo froze in surprise. Soon after, her cheeks turned red and she nodded.

Empress Chen laughed and said, "Chang Sheng isn't young anymore. People of the same age as him already have children that are old enough to run around. This empress is just feeling anxious for him and doesn't have any intention of pressuring you." She walked to Wei Luo's side, held up Wei Luo's hands, and patted them. "Having a child is always good for a woman. Besides, this empress would also like to have grandchildren to hold."

As Wei Luo walked out of Bao He Hall, she felt as if she had been defeated and was running away.

She and Zhao Jie had never avoided the topic of children. It wasn't that they didn't want to have children. Moreover, they went to bed together every night. This matter couldn't be rushed... Empress Chen had spoke so frankly. She really didn't know how to answer her.

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On the same day that Wei Luo entered the palace, Zhao Liuli got sick in the evening.

The sickness arrived quickly. Zhao Liuli had perfectly fine before she fainted and fell to the ground. Empress Chen's heart was burning with worry and anxiety. She stayed by Zhao Liuli's side without resting or sleeping.

Fortunately, Liuli woke up the next morning. While crying, the first words she spoke was, "Imperial mother, I want to see older brother Yang Zhen."

How could Empress Chen's heart not ache? On the very same day, she went to the imperial study to look for Emperor Chong Zhen and asked him to agree to Zhao Liuli and Yang Zhen's marriage.

Emperor Chong Zhen had originally still been opposed to this, but his arrogance disappeared when he was faced with Empress Chen and he began to sway to her side.

He had been in the process of looking for a way to end their stalemate. If he agreed to Empress Chen's request, perhaps her expression wouldn't be so bad when she saw him. Moreover, Zhao Liuli was his daughter and he naturally wanted her to have a happy life. Hearing that Zhao Liuli had gotten sick during the past day, he also couldn't bear to see her like this.

Later on, Yang Zhen entered the palace and pleaded to see Emperor Chong Zhen and the two of them talked for an entire afternoon in the imperial study. Their conversation was mystery, but the emperor changed his mind early next morning. He agreed to bestow Princess Tianji to Yang Zhen as his wife. An auspicious date was selected for their wedding. In addition, he also rewarded Yang Zhen with a residence, a hundred fertile fields, and countless gold, silver, and precious stones.

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Wei Luo let out a sigh in a relief after she heard that Zhao Liuli and Yang Zhen's matter was resolved.

She would frequently think about Empress Chen's words when she had too much free time.

It was strange. She had been married to Zhao Jie for almost half a year, but her period still came regularly. She had heard that two months after Liang Yu Rong married Wei Chang Yin, a doctor had diagnosed that she was pregnant by checking her pulse.

Wei Luo and Zhao Jie were visiting Duke Ying's residence today. By chance, her oldest female cousin, Wei Dong, had come back on the same day to visit her maiden family and had also brought a two-year-old son with her.

That cute and delicate child had red lips and white teeth. When he saw someone, his easy smile made people feel joyful.

Even Wei Luo, who didn't like children that much, couldn't resist wanting to pinch his cheeks.

Her little nephew's nickname was Duo Fu and he especially liked things with bright colors. By chance, Wei Luo was wearing a peach-blossom-colored, pleated skirt embroidered with treasure boxes today. Duo Fu kept circling around her and pulling at her skirt and her fingers. He would giggle as he looked at her and called her aunty with a lisp. It made Wei Luo feel as if her heart was melting.

Although Zhao Jie didn't express anything, she could tell that he also liked little children.

As they were leaving, Zhao Jie gave Duo Fu a silver longevity charm. The young child didn't know what it was and tried gnawing on it, which caused many people to smile.

On the way back home, Wei Luo was lying down on Zhao Jie's lap and said, "Big brother, let's have a child, okay?"

Zhao Jie only smiled and kneaded her palm without saying anything.

Wei Luo immediately noticed his moodiness. She raised her head



and asked, “You don’t want to?”

Zhao Jie said, “I heard that many women die while giving birth. Ah Luo, you’re still young. I don’t want you to be in any danger.”

Wei Luo hurriedly shook her head, “I won’t. I’ll carefully take care of my body. I guarantee that there won’t be any problems.” She added, “Look at Duo Fu. He’s so cute. If we have a child, he or she will definitely be very cute too.”

Zhao Jie hugged her and thought for a while. He recollected how Wei Luo looked as child. No one would disagree that she had looked as if she was carved from white jade and was as lovely as snow and rain.

Wei Luo continued to try to persuade him, “Okay? Yu Rong is around the same age as me and she’s already pregnant. Oldest cousin Chang Yin doesn’t seem as worried as you.” As she said this, she sat up. She held Zhao Jie’s shoulder and asked, “Big brother, is it because you can’t? And that’s why...”

Zhao Jie interrupted her words and asked in a threatening tone, “What are you saying?”

Wei Luo, “...” She had accidentally blurted those words out. Was it too late to take those words back?

It was too late for her to feel regret. Zhao Jie wrapped his arms around her waist and said, “Okay, let’s have a child tonight after we get home.”

As a result, Zhao Jie carried Wei Luo straight to their room once they returned home. He tormented Wei Luo inside and out several times and didn’t let her off until the marble white color of the dawn sky could be seen.

In the end, Wei Luo resembled a person that had been scooped out of water. Her entire body was sweaty. Even the quilt underneath her was wet. She was lying in Zhao Jie’s arms as she complained, “Zhao Jie, you’re a perverted beast.”

Zhao Jie kissed her face. “Do you think I’m capable now?”

Wei Luo didn’t answer this question. She had already fallen asleep.

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Somehow the news that Wei Luo and Zhao Jie wanted a child traveled to Empress Chen’s ears.

Empress Chen attached even more importance to this issue than the both of them combined. She immediately sent an older female servant to Prince Jing’s residence. Wei Luo had seen this servant a few times and she had heard Empress Chen call her “Yu Mama”. She looked very stern and solemn. The palace servants that worked under her were all slightly scared of her.

Yu Mama walked forward and stopped in front of Wei Luo. She didn’t act as fawningly servile as other people. She only saluted and said, “This servant greets Her Highness Princess Consort Jing. Your Highness, this servant asks you to please cooperate with this servant in the future.”

Wei Luo nodded, “I’ll have to bother Mama.” Since she was someone sent by Empress Chen, she had to give her some face.

But a few days later, Wei Luo found out that the scope of Yu Mama’s control was too much.

Since she had come here, she had requested that Zhao Jie and Wei Luo sleep in separate beds. In order to safeguard the purity level of the sperm, she also requested that Zhao Jie and Wei Luo could only sleep together every three nights. There were also many other rules in addition to these two rules. They had to wash with unscented, clean water. They couldn’t drink wine, eat spicy food, lose their temper, and so on.

Because they were only sharing a bed every three nights, Zhao Jie wouldn’t be satisfied until he tormented Wei Luo until late in the evening. The next morning, Wei Luo didn’t even have the strength

to leave the bed.

After that, Yu Mama had a new rule. When they copulated, it couldn't last more than two hours.

Not only that, Yu Mama also controlled Wei Luo meals. She couldn't eat any oily food. She also couldn't eat meat or fish. Wei Luo felt as if she was living the life of ascetic nun. After several days of this, Zhao Jie's face was already as black as the bottom of pot without Wei Luo saying a word.

Zhao Jie had been preoccupied by the difficult problem of Qing Zhou's drought. Every day, he would leave early and come back late. It was one thing for him to not be able to see Wei Luo during the daytime. But now, he couldn't even hug his little wife at night.

The two of them were clearly living under the same roof, but they didn't see each other for three days!

# Chapter 155.1

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When Zhao Jie came back from Shen Ji Barracks today, he directly went to Wei Luo's room.

In accordance to Yu Mama's rules, he could sleep with Wei Luo today. Honestly, after the past several days, Zhao Jie had been forced to the point that he felt it wasn't important if they had sex or not. Right now, he just wanted to hug Wei Luo and chat with her. He would be satisfied with just falling asleep while holding her in his arms.

Yu Mama was worried that Zhao Jie and Wei Luo would secretly meet each other, so she had arranged for Zhao Jie to sleep in a room that was in Zhang Tai Courtyard's eastern wing. It felt as if this room was a million miles away from Wei Luo's room. The feeling of someone else controlling when he could hug his own wife was truly unbearable.

Just as he reached the entrance to the main room, he heard Wei Luo's voice.

"Why is it pork liver again? I've been eating pork liver for several days. Can't I eat something different?" Wei Luo pitifully complained.

Jin Lu consoled her, "Miss, this is what Yu Mama instructed. Yu Mama said that eating pork liver is good for your spleen and liver. It'll help you get pregnant. Miss, just endure this for a bit." Even though she said these words, Jin Lu was also very dissatisfied with that Yu Mama. Relying on the fact that she was sent here by Her Majesty, Yu Mama meddled in many of Prince Jing's residence's matters, which made many people dislike her.

Wei Luo rummaged through the dishes on the table. There actually wasn't a single dish that she was interested in eating. It was the same old options: pork liver, lentil congee, and winter melon and pork soup. She gloomily put down her chopsticks. "Go

tell Yu Mama that I want to eat sliced fish in cream sauce and crispy pigeon.”

Hearing these words, Zhao Jie chuckled. This little fellow really didn't have a conscience. He missed her so much that he wasn't even able to have a restful sleep, but she was more interested in eating this and that.

Just as Zhao Jie was about to step inside, a voice from behind suddenly called out, “Your Highness, please stop here.”

Zhao Jie turned around. When he saw Yu Mama's face, his phoenix eyes sunk. “Yu Mama, is there something wrong?”

The only reason he addressed her as “Yu Mama” was to give face to Empress Chen. Zhao Jie was a person that didn't have a good temper. If someone else had tried to control him the way she was doing, he probably would have already sent this person to the underworld.

However, Yu Mama couldn't see Zhao Jie's impatience. Lacking discernment, she continued to say, “This servant consulted a fortuneteller. The fortuneteller said today isn't an auspicious to share beds. Your Highness, please sleep in the eastern wing tonight. You can't sleep with the princess consort.”

Zhao Jie lowered his eyes and his emotions couldn't be seen. A long time later, he curved his lips and thought-provokingly asked, “Then Yu Mama, when would be a suitable day to sleep together?”

Yu Mama said, “It'll be an auspicious day five days from today.”

A layer of frost covered Zhao Jie's eyes. Ignoring Yu Mama's earlier words, he continued walking inside.

Yu Mama said, “Your Highness, please cooperate with this servant!”

Zhao Jie halted, turned his head and calmly asked, “What are you going to do if this prince goes inside today?”

Wei Luo had heard the voices from outside and was about to open the doors to walk outside. Seeing Zhao Jie and Yu Mama standing at the doorway, she didn't even have to guess to know what was happening. She was also feeling vexed with Yu Mama, so she didn't step forward to persuade them. If it weren't because of Empress Chen, she would have already driven this old creature out of the residence.

Yu Mama resolutely said, "If His Highnesses insists on entering, then there's no reason for this servant to stay here. This servant will leave tomorrow and report to Her Majesty."

Zhao Jie said, "That's perfect. This prince has already grown tired of seeing your old face. Don't wait until tomorrow. Leave here now."

It was only now that Yu Mama's face showed slight panic. Her previous threatening words usually worked with most people. She had thought that if she mentioned Empress Chen, Prince Jing would show restraint. Unexpectedly, he didn't value this at all. Yu Mama said, "Your Highness..."

Zhao Jie furrowed his eyebrows and suddenly took out the sword at his waist. He placed the sword against Yu Mama's neck, narrowed his eyes, and said, "If you say another word, this prince will take your life."

When the icy blade touched her skin, Yu Mama's legs trembled and she wanted to run away. She wasn't able to show any of her earlier arrogance and could only do her best to remain calm as she said, "Your Highness... Your Highness, calm down..."

Zhao Jie coldly said, "Leave!"

Yu Mama immediately let out a sigh in relief and frantically escaped.

Standing next to the treasure grid shelves, Wei Luo also let out a sigh in relief. Wonderful, she didn't have to continue eating pork

liver.

Zhao Jie sheathed the sword and said to Zhu Geng, “Move everything back from the eastern wing.”

Wei Luo came forward, hugged Zhao Jie’s waist, and rubbed against his chest. She raised her head and asked, “Aren’t you worried that Her Majesty will be mad if you drive Yu Mama away?”

Zhao Jie nodded, stroked her forehead, and said, “I can’t let my Ah Luo go hungry every day. Let husband see. Have you gotten thinner?”

At the mention of this, Wei Luo had a stomach full of grievances. She pointed at the food on the round, red sandalwood table that was carved with a pair of lions and complained, “You can say that again. It’s vegetarian dishes every day. I’m not a rabbit. How can I be full eating this? If I want to eat meat and fish, I can only eat pork liver and knuckle. It’s so pitiful.”

Zhao Jie started laughing after hearing her words and his previous malevolent aura disappeared.

When Zhao Jie had recently used a sword to threaten Yu Mama, his expression had been gloomy and he was exuding a murderous aura. No one dared to look at him. They had been afraid he would lash out at them. If it wasn’t because he didn’t want to let Wei Luo see blood, he might have really cut off Yu Mama’s head. Wei Luo was only person that wasn’t afraid of him and even warmly rushed into his arms to amuse him into laughing.

Zhao Jie pinched Wei Luo’s small face. As expected, she had become thinner. His heart naturally felt distressed and he proceeded to say, “I’ll bring you to Emerald Restaurant to eat tonight. Since that person is gone, you can eat whatever you want.”

Emerald Restaurant’s most famous dish was mutton soup. Wei

Luo's mood immediately improved when she thought of eating their tender and mouthwatering mutton.



## Chapter 155.2

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When they arrived at Emerald Restaurant, Wei Luo held Zhao Jie's hand for support as she came out of the carriage.

It was currently late in the evening and Emerald Restaurant was packed with people. The manager of the restaurant personally led Zhao Jie and Wei Luo up the stairs and into a private room.

Wei Luo was wearing a lilac, gauzy dress embroidered with plum blossoms. The dress was made of layer upon layers of cloth that was diaphanous as a cicada's wing. When she wore it, it felt as she walking through clouds. Although it was beautiful, it wasn't convenient to walk upstairs in this dress. Wei Luo had to lift up the skirt as she walked and couldn't see the staircase. A moment of carelessness and she ended up stepping on empty air. She started to fall forward.

Zhao Jie promptly reached out to catch her. One hand held her shoulder and the other hand supported her waist. In a helpless tone, he said, "Why can't you walk properly?"

Wei Luo was only left startled, but not hurt. After she regained her footing, she twitched her mouth and said, "Who told you to not hold my hand? Why are you walking so quickly?"

Zhao Jie couldn't help laughing. Two fingers tapped her forehead. "So you're saying it's my fault?"

Wei Luo said, "You're the one that said it."

Zhao Jie looked at her and didn't lower himself to argue with this little fellow. As they continued walking upstairs, he stretched his hand out and said, "Little great aunt, let's go."

Wei Luo curved her lips and placed her hand in his palm. Her pleased with herself smile said in shining words, "Good, you're being sensible now."

However, just as they reached the second floor, Wei Luo almost

stopped smiling.

Song Hui was standing near the top of the stairs. He was wearing a light brown woven robe with a plum blossom pattern. His hair was gathered up into a jade guan hat. He stood across from them and his gaze fell on Wei Luo. He had probably seen what had recently happened.

Wei Luo's smile froze. A long time later, she finally said, "Older brother Song Hui."

Since they had seen each other, it would be rude to not greet him. Wei Luo still felt guilty toward Song Hui. Because of her prejudice, she had sentenced him to a capital punishment in her heart early on. From the very beginning, she believed that a relationship with him wasn't possible. She had delayed Song Hui's marriage for several years. It had been wrong of her to wait until their families were discussing the wedding date to say she wanted to cancel their engagement.

Song Hui returned to her senses and lightly smiled. He walked closer to Wei Luo and Zhao Jie and said, "What a coincidence that we would meet here."

Wei Luo asked, "Older brother Song Hui, did you come here to eat also?"

As they were talking, Zhao Jie squeezed the palm of Wei Luo's hand without changing his expression. Although he didn't use much force, Wei Luo still shrunk back for a moment.

Song Hui nodded, "I came here with my wife."

It was only now that Wei Luo noticed there was a pretty, young woman standing next to Song Hui. She looked to be around seventeen or eighteen years old. She was wearing an apricot-colored jacket and a blue skirt embroidered with flowers and butterflies. Her hair was arranged in a zhui ma hairstyle. She looked gentle, virtuous, and graceful.

Wei Luo couldn't help feeling surprised when Song Hui addressed that young woman as "wife". "Older brother Song Hui, when did you get married? I didn't know."

"Over a month ago." Song Hui smiled and introduced her to Wei Luo, "This is my wife, Chen-shi."

Chen-shi saluted, "Greetings Prince Jing. Greetings Princess Consort Jing."

Wei Luo looked at her face and finally remembered where she had seen her before. She had seen Chen-shi at some of the palace banquets. Because Chen-shi had a gentle and soft-spoken personality and was always around talented scholarly women, she rarely had any interactions with Wei Luo. Chen-shi was Assistant Minister Chen's granddaughter and her full name was Chen Jing Rong. Wei Luo hadn't expected that she would marry Song Hui.

After she bid Song Hui farewell and they arrived at the private room, Wei Luo was slightly preoccupied with her thoughts.

Zhao Jie's expression was very ugly. After the manager of the restaurant asked them what food they liked to order, he fearfully withdrew from the room.

Wei Luo turned her head and saw that Zhao Jie's forehead was so furrowed that it could squeeze a fly to death. She couldn't resist bursting out in laughter for a moment. She hugged his arm and went closer to snuggle up to him. "Big brother, don't overthink. I was totally innocent with older brother Song Hui. There was nothing between us in the past and there won't be anything in the future either. I was just feeling surprised before. Moreover, he's also married. What is there for you to be unhappy about?"

Zhao Jie lowered his head and gave her a look, "Older brother Song Hui?"

Wei Luo immediately corrected herself, "Elder brother Song Hui." Seeing that Zhao Jie's expression hadn't changed, she

modified her words again, “Heir Song. Compiler and Editor Song.”

Song Hui was currently working as a compiler and editor at Hanlin Imperial Academy.

Zhao Jie sneered, “You don’t have feelings for him, but he has feelings for you.” Song Hui’s gaze hadn’t strayed from Wei Luo during their entire conversation.

Wei Luo blinked, “What?”

The food soon arrived. Zhao Jie helped Wei Luo stand up, patted her her head, and said, “Never mind. Let’s eat.”

Song Hui’s thoughts were beyond his control, but it was fine as long as he watched over the thoughts of the little fellow in front of him. This young girl didn’t have a conscience. She would go with whoever treated her the best. In order to keep her heart, he would have do his utmost to treat her the best.

Wei Luo was currently feeling guilty, so she mixed a saucer of sauce for Zhao Jie, cooked a finely sliced piece of mutton, dipped it into sauce, and placed it in Zhao Jie’s bowl. “Here, you eat it.”

Wei Luo had been craving for meat for a several days. It wasn’t easy for her to resist the fragrant meat smell and give the first piece of meat to Zhao Jie.

Zhao Jie glanced at her. The young girl was impatiently looking at him and seemed one step away from snatching the meat back in regret. He curved his lips and deliberately teased her, “Did you dip it in sesame sauce?”

Wei Luo nodded, “Yup.”

Zhao Jie supported his chin in his hand and said, “Ah Luo, you forgot. I don’t like sesame sauce.”

Wei Luo didn’t mind that she had forgotten at all. She plucked the piece back with her chopsticks as if nothing could be better. “Then, I’ll eat it myself.”

Right after that meat entered her mouth, Zhao Jie pinched her chin towards him and tyrannically stormed into her mouth and seized the mutton back.

At the end, he rubbed his lips against hers as if he wished to continue. His deep voice held laughter as he said, "You said it was for me. How could you eat it yourself?"

Wei Luo pursed her lips, moved back slightly, and silently expressed her complaint with her bright, limpid, almond-shaped eyes.

Those eyes were clearly saying, "I'm hungry, but you won't let me eat."

Zhao Jie's eyes softened after he looked at her. He scratched her little nose and said, "Come here, this prince will add food to your bowl."

Zhao Jie ladled a bowl of mutton soup and placed it down in front of Wei Lui. He said, "First, drink some soup to warm your stomach. It'll be good for your body."

Wei Luo picked up the small bowl that had a pattern of peony flowers and branching stems. She drank the entire bowl of soup by sipping.

Zhao Jie had cooked the mutton perfectly. It was rare and tender. When it was combined with the sauce that Zhao Jie had personally mixed, Wei Luo, who had only eaten vegetables and pork liver during the past several days, felt this meat was the most delicious food on earth. A short while later, Wei Luo had eaten so much that her stomach was bloated, but Zhao Jie hadn't eaten a single bite. Wei Luo couldn't let things continue this way. Embarrassed, she said, "You should eat too. Don't worry about me."

## Chapter 155.3

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By coincidence, a few officers and soldiers from Shen Ji Barracks were also here eating. They heard that Prince Jing and Princess Consort Jing were here and came over to propose a toast.

Zhu Geng came inside the room to ask Zhao Jie for instruction.

Zhao Jie said, “Let them in.”

And so, several people boisterously came into the room.

Wei Luo had seen three of these people at Shen Ji Barrack’s entrance. The tallest person and the one in the middle of the group was called Yu Zhi. The group of people went forward and saluted Zhao Jie and Wei Luo. They didn’t dare to bother the prince when he was having dinner with his wife. They had only planned to come here to propose a toast and leave right afterwards.

Wei Luo took a sip of Taiping green tea. Hearing their words, she pulled Zhao Jie’s sleeve and very seriously said, “You can’t drink wine.”

(T/N: Taiping was a prefecture that existed during the Ming and Qing Dynasty.)

The soldiers showed a baffled expression. It was only a few cups of wine. It shouldn’t be a big deal...

Based on their knowledge of Prince Jing’s temperament, he would mostly likely harden his face and fiercely reprimand the young princess consort. This young princess consort looked extremely delicate, but she seemed very brave. She actually dared to discipline the prince.

One of the soldiers tried to smooth things over by saying to the princess consort, “Your Highness, don’t worry. It’s only a few cups of wine. His Highness can drink many cups of wine without any difficulties.”

Wei Luo was very persistent. She shook her head and said, “No.”

Although she didn’t like Yu Mama, she agreed with Yu Mama’s words. If they wanted a child, they couldn’t drink wine. If they did, then the past several days of cultivating their bodies would be completely wasted.

Zhao Jie put down the wine cup and held Wei Luo’s hand. He said with a smile, “Did you hear the princess consort’s words? You can all withdraw.”

The soldiers felt that his behavior was rather inconceivable.

Yu Zhi had seen Zhao Jie’s protective attitude towards his young princess consort. Last time, he had only accidentally scared Wei Luo and he was still leading the soldiers in running outside the city wall for training. Yu Zhi led the group of people out of the room. Before he left, he even said, “Prince, please enjoy your meal.”

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After Zhao Jie drove Yu Mama back to the palace, Empress Chen summoned Wei Luo to the palace the next day.

Empress Chen was sitting at a rosewood table with a marble surface. She glanced at Wei Luo and said, “This empress has already heard of everything. Chang Sheng, that child, always had an excessively tyrannical temperament that can’t be disciplined. It’s normal for something like this to happen.” She sighed and rather helplessly shook her head. “Never mind, let nature take its course. This matter can’t be rushed. This empress won’t interfere with this matter anymore.”

Wei Luo said, “Imperial mother was only being considerate. It’s our fault for failing to live up to imperial mother’s kindly intentions.”

Empress Chen half-jokingly said, “If you truly feel that you let imperial mother down, give me a grandson to hold sooner than later.”

Sitting next to Empress Chen, Zhao Liuli clung to Empress Chen's arm and said, "Imperial mother, how long have imperial sister-in-law and imperial brother been married? You're acting so anxious, but having a child isn't like making mud people that can be finished in a brief moment. It depends on the will of the gods."

Empress Chen looked at her in askance. "How can you say this type of analogy?"

Zhao Liuli pouted. She felt this analogy was pretty good. Since imperial father had agreed to her marriage with Yang Zhen, she had immediately recovered from her illness and was as lively as a dragon. There wasn't a need to mention how high-spirited she was.

Empress Chen glanced at Zhao Liuli's posture before tapping her forehead and saying, "You're going to be married soon. Why are you still acting like a child? You're not even sitting properly. Aren't you worried that Yang Zhen will be disdainful of you?"

"I'll always be a child in front of imperial mother." Zhao Liuli acted cutely spoiled without the slightest scruple. In her mind, she thought that older brother Yang Zhen would never feel disdainful of her.

Wei Luo stayed in Zhao Yang Hall for a while. When she heard a palace servant announce that Emperor Chong Zhen would be coming soon, she stood up to bid farewell.

Feeling that the situation would be awkward, Zhao Liuli also left Zhao Yang Hall with Wei Luo.

Shortly after, Emperor Chong Zhen walked into the hall. He saw Empress Chen sitting on the couch and sipping tea. He walked forward and said with a smile, "Wan Wan, you seem like you're in a good mood."

Empress Chen raised her eyes and looked at him for a moment. She stood up to politely salute the emperor, "Your Majesty."

Emperor Chong Zhen had said many times that the empress



didn't need to salute him when she saw him. But, Empress Chen didn't listen to his words.

The emperor sat down across from the empress. There were three celadon teacups on the table. Wei Luo and Zhao Liuli had used two of the cups and Empress Chen was using the third cup. However, Empress Chen didn't tell a servant to bring another cup and had the emperor sit there without anything to drink.

Emperor Chong Zhen coughed once and asked, "Has Liuli's illness improved?"

Neither cold nor hot, Empress Chen said, "She's much better. Your Majesty, you're busy with government affairs and you still have energy to ask after Liuli. This consort thanks His Majesty on Liuli's behalf." These words were meant to ridicule him for not showing concern when Liuli had been poisoned back then.

The emperor's face showed embarrassment, "This emperor..."

"Your Majesty." Empress Chen interrupted him and asked, "This consort heard that seventh princess was the one that told you about Liuli and Yang Zhen's relationship?"

The emperor nodded. "Yes."

Empress Chen continued to ask, "How did seventh princess find out?"

"This..." The emperor wasn't able to answer.

"Seventh princess knew about this matter, but she didn't tell this empress. Why did she only inform Your Majesty of this matter?" Empress Chen oversaw the imperial harem. If anything happened in the imperial harem, she should be the first person that was informed. Zhao Lin Lang's action had definitely been inappropriate.

"For her to not act in accordance to the established standard, this empress probably doesn't have a significant status in the eyes of the seventh princess. When Noble Consort Ning was alive, she

either didn't properly teach the seventh princess the rules or perhaps Noble Consort Ning didn't respected this empress to begin with."

When Emperor Zhong Chen heard the last sentence, he sweated profusely and hurriedly said, "Lin Lang's action was inappropriate. How does the empress wish to deal with this matter?"

Empress Chen said, "Since she doesn't respect her elder, her morality and conduct is definitely subpar. This empress has two female officials that teach etiquette. How about taking this opportunity to properly teach the seventh princess the established etiquette rules?"

Emperor Chong Zhen said, "Let's do as you say."

After they finished discussing this matter, Emperor Chong Zhen saw that Empress Chen's expression had slightly eased and he couldn't resist saying, "Wan Wan, this emperor will stay at Zhao Yang Hall tonight..."

Empress Chen stood up, "This consort isn't feeling well today and won't be able to serve His Majesty. Your Majesty, please leave."

Emperor Chong Zhen almost choked on the rest of the words that he wanted to say. She had been civil when she had something she wanted to discuss with him. But as soon as they were finished talking, she started to brazenly drive him away.

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After half a month passed, there still wasn't any change to Wei Luo's stomach.

Wei Luo thought this seemed wrong. She and Zhao Jie shared a bed every night and Zhao Jie was always very vigorous. Why was she still not pregnant?

She had heard that the bodhisattva in Da Long Temple could grant any prayer, so she decided to go to this temple to worship

and pray to the bodhisattva the day after tomorrow. She hoped that she and Zhao Jie would have a child of their own soon.

## Chapter 156.1

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Today, the sunshine illuminated everything and there wasn't a cloud in sight for a thousand miles.

Wei Luo's period started last night and she was feeling very gloomy. She hadn't been concerned with this matter originally and felt that a child would come when it was time. There wasn't anything to worry about. However, Empress Chen and fourth aunt had repeatedly inquired about this matter. One said that Zhao Jie was old enough that they should be considering the problem of descendants. The other said that Liang Yu Rong was already pregnant. Why wasn't she pregnant yet? Their fussing had caused Wei Luo to be anxious too. In addition, her period had just started, so her mood hadn't been good. She had even reprimanded several servants this morning.

Zhao Jie had specially freed up a day in his schedule to go with Wei Luo to Da Long Temple to burn incense in worship. He knew that she wasn't in a good mood, so he stayed patient and tried to coax her. "I'm not even worried. What's there for you to be anxious about? Ah Luo, I married you because I want to pamper and take care of you. It wasn't because I wanted you to burn incense for me. If I only want a heir, I could have married anyone. Why would have I insisted on only being willing to marry you? Don't take imperial mother's words seriously. She's been thinking too much about having a grandson. If you feel too pressured, I'll talk with imperial mother so that you can decrease the frequency of going to Zhao Yang Hall to pay respects."

Wei Luo was sitting on his lap and moving his fingers back and forth as she counted them again and again. "But I want to give birth to our children."

Zhao Jie kissed the top of her head, but he felt that it wasn't enough. He closely held her small face and said, "Naturally, we'll have children in the future. Let's have three children. Two son and

one daughter, okay?”

Wei Luo nodded. Her mood had improved after hearing his persuasive words.

When they arrived at Da Long Temple's foothills, they saw Duke Ying's residence's carriage. Wei Luo had Jin Lu go over to the other carriage to inquire and found out that first madam and Liang Yu Rong had also come here to burn incense. They had also brought second branch's Wei Bao Shan with them.

Liang Yu Rong had recently been diagnosed as being pregnant for over a month. Her pregnancy didn't seem noticeable yet. First Madam was very concerned and had arranged for several servants to serve Liang Yu Rong. She was treated like a moon with all of the stars revolving around her.

Liang Yu Rong was very happy to see Wei Luo. She pulled Wei Luo to her side as they climbed the stairs. “Is your prince that unwilling to part from you? He's even coming with you to burn incense.”

Wei Luo somewhat jealously looked at Liang Yu Rong's stomach. Yu Rong had only been married for two months and she was already pregnant. She had been married for half a year without any signs of pregnancy. It really wasn't fair. “What about you? Why didn't oldest cousin Chang Yin come with you?”

Liang Yu Rong laughed as she objected, “You have to climb up long stairs to get to Da Long Temple. His leg hasn't fully recovered yet. There's no way I would let him come here with me.”

Look at that pleased with herself expression. Wei Luo wanted to ask Liang Yu Rong for advice on private bedroom matters. However, that Wei Bao Shan came over to greet her and Wei Luo curved the corners of her lips down.

Wei Luo didn't have a good impression of Wei Bao Shan. Last year, she had tried to seduce Zhao Jie by pretending to pull down

her handkerchief from a tree at the hot spring villa.

Thus, Wei Luo only nodded in response and showed a very alienated attitude.

Liang Yu Rong pulled Wei Luo to walk faster for a few steps and whispered, "You should keep away from Wei Bao Shan."

Wei Luo stopped herself from raised her eyebrows. She had thought she was the only one that disliked Wei Bao Shan. "Why?"

Liang Yu Rong said, "Just remember my words. I heard that she's a person that's not satisfied with her position. She tried to seduce Heir Song when we went to Count Zhong Yi's residence as a guest last time, but Heir Song only ignored her."

Song Hui? Wei Luo felt somewhat surprised. She hadn't expected that this Wei Bao Shan would be a person that was so discontent with her position. But when she thought about, it wasn't that surprising. Second aunt was deliberately oppressing her and not allowing her to marry. Wei Bao Shan had already aged to an old maiden of eighteen years old and her status in Duke Ying's household was awkward. If she didn't get married soon, no one would want her. By that time, her only choice would be to marry a widower or be someone's concubine.

Wei Luo said, "Don't worry. I rarely come into contact with her."

Da Long Temple was at the top of a mountain. When they had climbed halfway up, Wei Luo ran out strength and Zhao Jie had to carry her up the rest of the way in the end. Liang Yu Rong felt very envious when she saw this. In her heart, she felt that Wei Luo's life was too wonderful. Before she was married, she had Wei Chang Hong to carry her. After she was married, she had Prince Jing to carry her. The more she thought, the more envious she felt.

Liang Yu Rong was pregnant and shouldn't be exercising too strenuously. As a result, she would frequently pause as she walked up the stairs and arrived at the temple an hour after Wei Luo.

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Since it was praying for a child, then it would only seem sincere if they came here together to pray. Wei Luo pulled Zhao Jie to kneel down on the praying mats with her. They bowed to the Bodhisattva statue three times, lit three incense sticks, and inserted the incense into the three-legged incense burner.

When they were walking out of the main hall, Zhao Jie rapped Wei Luo's head. "Have you stopped worrying now?"

Wei Luo clutched her head. Just as she was about to speak, she saw someone at the entrance when she raised her head.

Wei Bao Shan took a step back and said with her head lowered, "Greeting Prince Jing, Greetings Princess Consort Jing."

Wei Luo unobtrusively furrowed her eyebrows. She didn't know how long Wei Bao Shan had been standing here.

## Chapter 156.2

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Wei Bao Shan seemed as if she didn't notice that Wei Luo didn't want to see her. She glanced at the Guanyin statue (patroness of female fertility) inside the hall and said, "Has His Highness and Her Highness come here to wish for a child?"

Wei Luo raised an eyebrow and gave an irrelevant answer, "Miss Bao Shan is in very good shape. First Madam and First Young Madam are still climbing the stairs and you're already here."

It wasn't clear if Wei Bao Shan had understood the ridicule in Wei Luo's words. She said with a smile, "Your Highness, you're flattering me too much. It's only that my body isn't fragile and pampered. The path here wasn't that long either." Her words were hinting that Wei Luo had needed Zhao Jie to carry her up the mountain.

She went back to talking about the previous topic. "Your Highness, if you're wishing for a child, I have a useful item from my hometown. It's an embroidered picture of a Chinese unicorn with a hundred children. It's said to be very effective and has helped many couples. If Your Highness doesn't mind, I can deliver it to Prince Jing's residence after I return home."

Wei Luo truly didn't like her and there was no need to give Wei Bao Shan face, so she bluntly said, "Really? No need. I never accept things that have unclear origins. Miss Bao Shan, you should just keep it for yourself."

Wei Bao Shan's expression changed. Her eyes flitted towards Zhao Jie. She seemed to be asking for his opinion.

Zhao Jie always valued Wei Luo's opinion as the most important point. Moreover, he could also see that Wei Luo was feeling vexed towards this girl in front of them. Thus, he indifferently said, "If Ah Luo wants an embroidered picture of a Chinese unicorn with a hundred children, the palace seamstresses can embroidered one



for her when we return to the capital.”

His words made Wei Bao Shan seem as if she was bringing disgrace to herself.

Wei Bao Shan's face changed back and forth between losing all color and turning completely red. It was extremely interesting sight.

Wei Luo's mood turned cheerful. She held Zhao Jie's hand as they left the hall and headed towards the guest rooms at the back of the temple. “That sounds good. I want one that's six feet wide and ten feet tall.

Zhao Jie agreed with a smile.

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Shortly after, first madam and Liang Yu Rong reached the top of the mountain. After they prayed to Bodhisattva and burned incense, they also went to the guest rooms.

Other than have an effective Bodhisattva, Da Long Temple also had unique vegetarian meals. They frequently had worshippers coming here for these two reasons. After Zhao Jie and Wei Luo had lunch at noon, they prepared to return home. When they arrived at Da Long Temple's entrance and were about to descend the mountain, Wei Luo's sharp eyes immediately noticed that Zhao Jie was missing something on his waist. “Big brother, where's your sachet?”

Zhao Jie lowered his head to look. He must have inadvertently left it behind while they were eating. Just as he was about to order Zhu Geng to go look for it, he saw Wei Bao Shan walking over to them. Gasping for breathing, she stopped in front of Zhao Jie. “Your Highness, please wait.”

Wei Luo raised her eyebrows as soon as she Wei Bao Shan.

Zhao Jie furrowed his eyebrows, “What?”

Wei Bao Shang took out a forest green sachet embroidered with golden thread and brought it forward in front of Zhao Jie. “Your Highness, please look. Is this your sachet?”

Zhao Jie didn’t respond, but Wei Luo saw that it was indeed Zhao Jie’s sachet. Zhao Jie liked plum blossoms and there was two wintry, pure plum blossoms embroidered on his sachet. He probably really liked this sachet. He had been constantly wearing that sachet recently.

Wei Bao Shan added, “I found this sachet in a guest room. Because this vaguely resembled Your Highness’s sachet, I came here to ask. If this sachet belongs to the prince, please be more careful. Don’t lose it again.”

“Zhu Geng.” Zhao Jie expressionlessly said.

Zhu Geng hurriedly appeared, “Your Highness, this servant is here.”

Zhao Jie didn’t take another glance. He turned around and ordered, “Burn the sachet. Don’t let this prince see it again.”

Zhu Geng was startled for a moment, but he quickly recovered and took the sachet from Wei Bao Shan. He took a folded matchbook from his clothing, lit a matchstick and placed the lit matchstick underneath the sachet. A gust of wind later, the sachet was burned to ashes.

Wei Bao Shan’s expression stiffened. She would have never expected that Zhao Jie would respond in this manner and was left utterly speechless.

Zhao Jie walked to Wei Luo’s side and kneaded Wei Luo's hand. She was equally stunned. “Stop staring into space. Do you want me to carry you down the mountain?”

Wei Luo returned to her senses and shook her head. Descending the mountain wasn’t as tiring as climbing up. She could walk down by herself.

When they arrived at the bottom of the mountain, Wei Luo finally asked, “Isn’t a little too regrettable to burn that sachet?”

Zhao Jie answered her question with another question, “What’s there to regret?”

Wei Luo said, “Didn’t you like that sachet a lot? I saw that you wore it several times.”

Zhao Jie smiled and carried her up onto the shaft of the carriage. He raised his head to look at her and said, “If I had taken the sachet, wouldn’t my little vinegar (symbolizes jealousy) jar have caused a huge disturbance? Your mouth was pouting so much that I could have hanged an oil pitcher on it.”

Wei Luo slapped his hand away. She felt he was completely slandering her. “I’m not a vinegar jar.” He was clearly the one who was a vinegar jar.

Zhao Jie stepped onto the carriage, lifted the curtain, and entered the carriage. He didn’t continue to tease her and his expression had become slightly stern. “Wei Bao Shan has a scheming mind. It’s better if you have less contact with her in the future.”

Wei Luo didn’t expect that he would notice this too. She sat down at his side and enthusiastically asked, “How did you notice this?”

Zhao Jie felt that her question was slightly laughable. “If you found a sachet that belonged to an unfamiliar man, would you specially return it to him?”

Wei Luo properly said, “Naturally, I wouldn’t. I would throw it away. Why would I meddle with someone else’s item?”

That was the exactly the reason.

Zhao Jie didn’t say another word. He originally didn’t care to discuss this type of troublesome matter. He only said more than usual because he saw that Wei Luo had been unhappy. As he expected, the little fellow became entirely free from worry after he said those words and changed the topic. “Are you really going to

give me an embroidered picture of a Chinese unicorn?”

Zhao Jie nodded, “Of course.”

On the next day, Zhao Jie went to the palace and went to the Embroidery Department to look for the best seamstress out of the hundred seamstresses that worked there to embroider a picture of a Chinese unicorn with a hundred children for Wei Luo. Empress Chen was currently longing for a grandson. When she heard about this picture and how Wei Luo had brought Zhao Jie with her to Da Long Temple to pray, she was extremely supportive. She even called Wei Luo to her side and spent the visit excessively praising her.

## Chapter 156.3

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The weather became warmer and warmer. Spring quickly turned into summer. It would soon be Duke Ying's wife's birthday banquet.

Wei Luo felt listless as soon as summer arrived. She wasn't interested in doing anything. Zhao Jie ordered the servants to buy a wagon of ice. The ice was placed in all four corners of their room to lower the temperature. It was only after this was done that Wei Luo felt slightly better.

On old madam's birthday, Wei Luo wore a light muslin top that was as thin as a cicada's wing. It was paired with a light red and green gauzy skirt. Her attire looked very refreshing.

Zhao Jie was wearing a deep black robe embroidered with honeysuckles and a jade waist accessory. His tall and straight body showed his bone-deep handsomeness.

After they arrived at Duke Ying's residence and presented old madam's birthday gift, Zhao Jie and the other male guests stayed in the receiving room and Wei Luo went to the reception pavilion to converse with the other female guests.

When fourth madam saw her, she didn't rush to ask her if she was pregnant. It was probably because she could tell that Wei Luo also wanted a child, but the child still hadn't come yet. It would be superfluous to discuss this topic further. Fourth madam didn't want to put Wei Luo in a difficult position, so she didn't bring up this topic in front of her.

However, just because fourth madam didn't mention this, it didn't mean that other people would also stay quiet on this issue.

Wei Luo talked with fourth madam for a while. Because she was feeling tired, she wanted to go to her old room to sleep for a bit. As Wei Luo passed through a flowerbed, her handkerchief was swept

away by the wind and landed behind the rock garden. Wei Luo led Jin Lu over there to look for her handkerchief. Right after she picked up the handkerchief, she heard people speaking on the other side of the rock garden.

“Miss, this servant saw Princess Consort Jing passing by here recently.”

Wei Luo heard Wei Bao Shan’s voice next, “How come I didn’t see her? You’re probably mistaken.”

The servant girl looked left and right. She wasn’t certain as she said, “Strange, where did she go?” She immediately followed these words by saying, “This servant guarantees that this servant didn’t make a mistake. Princess Consort Jing is so beautiful. She looks like someone that walked out of a flower. This servant had never seen someone so beautiful.”

Wei Bao Shan didn’t reply.

That servant girl was probably young. When she spoke, her voice was very lively. She chattered on, “This servant heard that Prince Jing is extremely pampering towards Princess Consort Jing. During the Spring Lantern Festival, he personally made over a hundred lanterns and had them released in Huai An River just to make Princess Consort Jing happy.”

Wei Bao Shan stopped walking for a moment and slowly said, “Really?”

Even though she said those words, she secretly felt this was very probable based on what she had seen when she went to Da Long Temple last time. How many husbands would crouch down in front of other people to carry their wives up a mountain to pray at a temple? Not only had Zhao Jie done that, there hadn’t been the slightest hint of dissatisfaction on his face. He truly cherished Wei Luo to the core of his bones.

The servant girl added, “Of course, it’s real. Princess Consort

Jing really makes a person feel envious. Not only was she born in a good family, she also married well...”

Wei Bao Shan lightly sneered. Her tone was slightly disapproving as she said, “What’s there to envy? So what if she married well? Isn’t she still a hen that can’t lay eggs?”

On the other side of the rock garden, Wei Luo’s eyes turned icy.

Jin Lu was angry that her entire body trembled. She clenched her fist and said, “Miss, this Wei Bao Shan is too outrageous...”

Wei Luo didn’t respond to her words. She calmly walked out from behind the rock garden and blocked Wei Bao Shan’s path.

Wei Bao Shan hadn’t expected that Wei Luo would be nearby. Although her face immediately paled and she bit her bottom lip, she was able to force herself to remain calm

On the other hand, the servant girl that was wearing a dark green jacket and skirt fell down to the floor on her knees. Panic-stricken, she said, “Greeting Your Highness...”

Wei Luo ignored the servant girl and only looked at Wei Bao Shan as she said, “Miss Bao Shan, the next time you talk about people behind their backs, don’t forget the words “the walls have ears”.

Wei Bao Shan opened and closed her mouth without saying a word. She lowered her head.

Wei Luo coldly said, “Kneel.”

When the servants that were passing through this courtyard noticed that something was wrong, they inevitably couldn’t resist glancing back.

Wei Bao Shan had thought Wei Luo was only an overly spoiled, young girl. After all, when she interacted with Wei Luo in the past, she didn’t discover anything unusual about Wei Luo. However, when Wei Luo had ordered her kneel, her cold and severe tone had

increased her imposingness and made Wei Bao Shan feel as if there was no room to refute.

She hadn't realized that there was a reason why Wei Luo hadn't sorted her out previously. Wei Luo used to feel that Wei Bao Shan was beneath her notice.

Right now, she had poked at Wei Luo's sore spot and Wei Luo would no longer be courteous towards her.

In front of everyone, Wei Bao Shan slowly kneeled down. She tried to explain, "My earlier words... They weren't directed at the princess consort..."

Wei Luo softly smiled and leaned over to face Wei Bao Shan. Wei Luo had previously felt angry, but seeing Wei Bao Shan's terror, she controlled herself and only felt disdain. She had thought Wei Bao Shan would be more daring, but her daring had only amounted to this much. "It wasn't directed at me? Then, whom was it directed towards? Wei Bao Shan, you have to take responsibility for your words. Do you think I'm a fool? You're scared now, but why didn't you control your mouth before?"

Wei Luo's eyes were smiling and she seemed very agreeable, but her mouth said, "Showing lack of regard towards your superior. Insulting the imperial family. With this alone, I can condemn you for your crime. Jin Lu, come here. Punish her with twenty slaps. Not even one slap can be missed."

Jin Lu had wanted to do this since she first heard Wei Bao Shan's words. Hearing Wei Luo's command, she was naturally happy to obey. She walked to Wei Bao Shan's side, rolled up her sleeves, and satisfyingly slapped her with one hand and then the other hand in quick succession.

Twenty-three slaps were heard in the courtyard. Each slap was louder than the last.

Only a short time had passed. Wei Bao Shan's face had swollen to



the size of steamed bun. It was an absolutely unsightly appearance.

Wei Luo looked at her and was rather satisfied. She curved her lips and asked Wei Bao Shan, “Do you acknowledge your wrongdoing now?”

Wei Bao Shan tightly clutched her swaying skirt and nodded her head in humiliation. She probably couldn’t speak right now.

Wei Luo lowered her eyes to look at her. “Since you know you were wrong, go to Second Madam and tell her that you did something wrong and that I ordered a servant to discipline you. Otherwise, other people will wonder if they see you like this.” She suddenly thought of something and faintly smiled. “Go now.”

Wei Bao Shan suddenly widened her eyes and incredulously looked at Wei Luo.

Second madam was currently in the reception pavilion and there were also many guests gathered there. If she went there now, wouldn’t everyone have a poor impression of her?

## Chapter 157.1

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Many noble women had come to Duke Ying's residence to attend old madam's birthday banquet today. If Wei Bao Shan went to the reception pavilion and the guests saw her like this, she would certainly be ridiculed by other people.

If this weren't true, Wei Luo wouldn't have allowed her to go there.

Wasn't Wei Bao Shan hoping to curry favor with the rich and powerful in hopes of advancing her social status and marrying someone from a good family? Wei Luo wanted to see. What were the chances that a madam would be interested in Wei Bao Shan as a daughter-in-law after seeing her like this?

When Wei Bao Shan arrived at the reception pavilion, second madam was speaking to Marquis Xin Yang's wife. She was enjoying their discussion quite a bit. Second madam personally brewed a teapot of bi luo chun (a type of green tea grown in Dong Tian Mountain region), poured a cup of tea, and pushed the cup in front of Marquis Xin Yan's wife. "I heard that a new temple has been built outside of the capital. How about going there to donate money on another day?"

Marquis Xin Yan's wife picked up the teacup that had a pattern made with varying shades of grey glaze. Just as she was about to nod, she heard a collective gasping sound in the reception pavilion. She turned her head to look in that direction.

Wei Bao Shan had appeared at the entrance and she cut a sorry figure. Her cheeks were red and swollen and her hair was an unsightly mess. With red eyes, she walked to second madam Song-shi's side, curtsied and called out, "Mother."

Second madam's face changed colors. She felt as if Wei Bao Shan had caused her to completely lose face. "Who told you to come here? Why do you look like this?"

The surrounding madams started whispering. Even Marquis Xin Yan's wife furrowed her eyebrows and put down the teacup she had recently picked up.

Second Madam Song-shi naturally didn't miss her minute actions. She had finally succeeded in having a closer relationship with Marquis Xin Yan's wife. She naturally couldn't let Wei Bao Shan ruin everything at the last minute. Song-shi's expression became stern and she scolded her, "Haven't I properly taught you? Why haven't you even learned a small degree of propriety? Look at your clothing. Should you be coming out here and letting other people see you like? And your face, what's happened with it?" As she spoke, her eyebrows furrowed.

Song-shi looked very dissatisfied as she continued, "That woman from outside probably didn't properly teach you. But since you entered this household, you have to follow the rules of a duke's household. Otherwise you'll damage the duke's family's reputation when you go out."

When the other madams heard these words, they suddenly realized. So, she was a daughter from an outside mistress. Everything made sense now.

Wei Bao Shan tightly bit her bottom lip and slowly said, "Mother, please calm down. Bao Shan came here to ask for forgiveness."

Song-shi was very disdainful of her to begin with. When she heard the words, "ask for forgiveness", she immediately felt annoyed. "What have you done?"

Wei Bao Shan said, "I..."

"Second Madam." Jin Lu passed through entranced, saluted second madam, and said, "Miss Bao Shan had spoke rudely and offended Princess Consort Jing. The princess consort ordered this servant to teach Miss Bao Shan a lesson."

Not only was Wei Luo previously Duke Ying's family's fourth

miss, she was currently Prince Jing's dearest person. Her position was incomparably higher than Wei Bao Shan's. Wei Bao Shan, a daughter born from an outside mistress, had dared to offend Princess Consort Jing? Second madam fiercely glared at Wei Bao Shan. She was truly fed up with this girl to the core of her bones. Second madam asked Jin Lu, "Is Ah Luo okay?"

Jin Lu raised her eyes and glanced at Wei Bao Shan. She slowly said, "The princess consort was extremely angered by Miss Bao Shan. She's currently resting in Pine Courtyard."

Second madam hurriedly said, "It's my fault that Ah Luo suffered a grievance. I was negligent in my discipline. I'll go over there to apologize to Wei Luo later."

Having explained everything, Jin Lu turned around and withdrew from the reception pavilion.

Second madam was infuriated by Wei Bao Shan, but it wouldn't be good for her to explode in anger in front of the other madams. She only angrily said, "Hmph! Why are you still standing here? Return to your room."

Wei Bao Shan's eyes were filled with glistening tears of humiliation. She bit her lip before turning around and rushed out.

Just as she had run to a verandah, she collided against a man wearing a sapphire blue robe embroidered with branches of flowering chrysanthemum. She hurriedly apologized and ran away with a tearful face.

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Wei Luo was indeed resting at Pine Courtyard. But, it wasn't because she was angered by Wei Bao Shan's words.

She was currently in a great mood and talking with Liang Yu Rong. Liang Yu Rong had recently made several sets of clothing for babies. She had made little tops, little shoes, and little jackets for both genders. She had even prepared diapers. Wei Luo was

stunned as Liang Yu Rong showed her these items.

Liang Yu Rong fiddle with small clothing as she said, “I calculated the time. My baby will be born in winter. I need to prepare more thick clothing.”

Wei Luo picked up a small crimson embroidered jacket to look. It was very small piece of clothing. She could almost imagine a baby wearing this jacket. She felt slightly envious and in a jealous tone asked, “How do you know if it’ll be a boy or a girl? These are mostly clothing for a girl. What will you do if you give birth to a boy?”

Liang Yu Rong didn’t mind. She said with a smile, “If it’s a baby boy, then I’ll just give birth to a daughter in the future.” She was already looking obviously pregnant. She straightened her back as she sat on the arhat couch. Her reasoning made sense. “Big brother Chang Yin wants a daughter. He prepared most of these clothes. Even if I don’t give birth to a daughter this time, we said that we would definitely have one in the future.”

Wei Luo puffed up her cheeks and pushed the small jacket back into Liang Yu Rong’s hand. “You’re not afraid of exhausting yourself by having so many children.”

Liang Yu Rong knew that Wei Luo was just expressing sour grapes and didn’t lower herself to argue with her. She looked around and seeing that there wasn’t anyone around, she asked in Wei Luo’s ear, “Ah Luo... have you thought about seeing a doctor?”

Wei Luo froze for a moment and thought of Wei Bao Shan’s words. “A hen that can’t lay eggs.” Her expression immediately turned ugly.

Liang Yu Rong thought she was angry and hurriedly explained, “Don’t take it the wrong way. I didn’t mean it that way. It’s just that...” She spent a long time trying to figure out the words to say, but she couldn’t think of anything. She let out a sigh and held Wei Luo’s hand as she said, “Ah Luo, you’ve already been married to

Prince Jing for half a year and there hasn't been a hint of pregnancy. Perhaps, it's not your problem, but Prince Jing's problem?"

It wasn't that Wei Luo hadn't thought about this problem before. But, she didn't dare to face this problem and kept avoiding this issue. She continued to think that a child would come when it was the right time. After all, she and Zhao Jie were both very normal and didn't have signs of illnesses. However, now that Liang Yu Rong had brought this up, she had to face this problem.

Could there really be something wrong with her body?

Wei Luo contemplated for a while and didn't hear a single word that Liang Yu Rong said afterwards.

## Chapter 157.2d

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Fifteen minutes later, a servant girl wearing a pink jacket and skirt came inside and said, “First Young Madam, First Young Master came here to bring you back.”

This room had been Wei Luo’s room when she was an unmarried girl. It wouldn’t be good for Wei Chang Yin to enter this room, so he waited outside near the doorway.

Liang Yu Rong hurriedly put down the clothes in her hands and walked outside.

Wei Luo followed behind Liang Yu Rong. She was slightly surprised when she saw the elegant and handsome man standing outside. Wei Chang Yin’s leg had mostly recovered and he could freely walk around.

He was currently standing underneath a locust tree in the courtyard. The flower petals fell from the tree with a faint rustling sound and onto his shoulders. He looked towards the doorway and faintly smiled when he met Wei Luo’s line of sight. He turned his gaze towards Liang Yu Rong and said, “You already spent enough time outside. You should go back and rest.”

After Liang Yu Rong became pregnant, Wei Chang Yin would closely watch after her. Liang Yu Rong had a careless and excitable personality, so Wei Chang Yin couldn’t be blamed for feeling worried. There was a set schedule of when she could go out each day. As soon as the time arrived, she had to go back to their room to rest.

Although Liang Yu Rong said Wei Chang Yin was too controlling, her heart felt very happy and sweet. What woman wouldn’t want to be watched over by her husband like this? The more he managed her life, the more it showed that he cared for her.

Liang Yu Rong reached Wei Chang Yin in a few steps and

wrapped her arms around his neck. She said, “Ah Luo is here today. Can’t I spend more time talking to her?”

Wei Chang Yin smiled rather helplessly, “Today is already an hour later than yesterday.” The implication was that he had already extended the deadline.

Wei Luo didn’t put Wei Chang Yin in a difficult position. She smoothed things over by saying, “That’s good. I have to leave soon too. I’ll come back on another day to visit Yu Rong.”

Shortly after Wei Chang Yin and Liang Yu Rong left, Wei Chang Hong returned to Pine Courtyard.

Wei Luo was currently lying underneath a Chinese parasol tree in the courtyard and enjoying the cool air. Wei Chang Hong was wearing an indigo robe today. He walked to Wei Luo’s side and furrowed his eyebrows as he asked, “Ah Luo, I heard that Wei Bao Shan offended you.”

Wei Luo opened her eyes. Seeing that it was Chang Hong, she sat up and said, “How did you find out about this?”

Wei Chang Hong said, “I heard the servants speaking about it. There was a huge fuss when second aunt wanted to punish Wei Bao Shan. Everyone in the residence knows about this.”

Second aunt had an irritable temperament. She had dislike Wei Bao Shan from the beginning. Now that Wei Bao Shan had caused her to lose face in front of other people, she naturally wouldn’t let her off. The second branch’s courtyard was probably in a panic-stricken and chaotic state. Wei Luo didn’t find this matter strange at all. She shifted slightly to the side to give Chang Hong space to sit down. “She spoke disrespectfully to her superior. I already had Jin Lu discipline her.”

Wei Chang Hong didn’t sit down. After considering for a moment, he turned around and headed out of Pine Courtyard. “I’ll tell second uncle about this and have her driven out of this



household.”

Wei Luo wasn't able to stop him. She watched as he walked farther and farther away.

If second uncle could be easily persuaded, second aunt wouldn't have ended in a stalemate with him originally. Their second uncle was usually very agreeable, but once he became stubborn about something, he was very stubborn. Wei Cheng felt a deep affection for his deceased outside mistress and was very fond of that woman's daughter. If they wanted Wei Bao Shan to leave Duke Ying's household, the only option was marrying her off sooner rather than later.

As for whom she would marry, that was very negotiable.

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Zhao Jie had also heard about Wei Bao Shan offending Wei Luo. He didn't ask Wei Luo any questions. Instead, he directly looked for Second Master and told Second Master Wei Chen to properly discipline his daughter. Wei Cheng was terrified by his powerful aura and didn't say a single word in Wei Bao Shan's defense. He repeatedly nodded and promised that he would properly discipline Wei Bao Shan. He even said that he would bring Wei Bao Shan over to apology to Wei Luo.

Zhao Jie calmly said, “No need. Ah Luo doesn't want to see her.”

Wei Cheng started another round of apologies. Although Zhao Jie had married Wei Luo and was Wei Cheng's junior in the family hierarchy, Wei Cheng wasn't able to stand up against Zhao Jie at all. Honestly, it would already be good enough if he didn't tremble in Zhao Jie's presence.

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After they returned to Prince Jing's residence, Wei Luo single-mindedly thought about Liang Yu Rong's words and remained distracted even during dinner.

Zhao Jie used his chopsticks to add a slice of fish in cream sauce to the small plate in front of her that had a pattern of peony flowers and lightly rapped her head with his other hand. "What are you thinking about? Didn't you say you wanted to eat sliced fish in cream sauce? I specially had the chef learn how to make this dish. Try it."

Wei Luo ate a bite of the soft and velvety fish. Zhao Jie had already removed the bones in the fish before putting it on her plate. It tasted deliciously creamy. Normally, a person would want to eat another bite after trying the first piece. However, Wei Luo wasn't interested in food right now. She only ate a little bit of the meal before putting down her chopsticks and bowl and saying, "I'm full. I'm going to go take bath. Big brother, you should eat more."

Zhao Jie stopped eating and watched Wei Luo's back figure as she left.

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Inside the cleansing room, Wei Luo entered the bath and mulled over what she would say to Zhao Jie later. When she saw the clothing that Liang Yu Rong had prepared for her future child today, Wei Luo felt for the first time that she really wanted a child with Zhao Jie. She generally didn't like children. She felt their endless crying was too noisy and they also tended to have runny noses. They were so dirty. But, when she thought about it more, if the child was Zhao Jie and hers, she would like him or her even if he or she were slightly dirty.

Zhao Jie probably felt the same way as her. At his age, he probably wanted an heir more than her. During today's visit to Duke Ying's residence, she paid special attention. Most men of Zhao Jie's age already had three or four children. Zhao Jie was the only without any children.

Feeling despondent, Wei Luo's eyebrows were twisted. Empress

Chen had told her that if she had a child, he or she would help her in the future. But, Wei Luo didn't feel this way. She liked Zhao Jie, so she naturally wanted to give him a child. It wasn't because she wanted someone on her side in the future, much less have someone to rely on.

After Wei Luo finished her bath, she dried her body off, put on a light blue robe that was embroidered with butterflies, slipped into a pair of embroidered satin shoes, and walked back to the inner room.

## Chapter 157.3

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Zhao Jie was sitting on the couch by the window. His expression was calm as he gestured at her, “Come here.”

Wei Luo could tell that he wasn't in a good mood. She thought he was blaming her for not properly eating. She hurriedly went over, wrapped her arms around his waist, said, “I ate too much at lunch, so I wasn't feeling hungry at dinner.”

Zhao Jie embraced her soft waist and carried her onto the couch. They sat on the couch face to face and he asked her, “What did Wei Bao Shan say to you?”

Wei Luo hadn't expected that he would ask her this question. She mumbled, “Nothing important.”

But, her expression showed otherwise. Wei Luo wouldn't tell him, but Zhao Jie could guess. It was definitely related to having a child. Zhao Jie stretched his arm out and pulled Wei Luo into his arms. His face lightly brushed against her cheek. “Ah Luo, don't worry about it.”

Wei Luo stayed quiet. After a while, she finally slinked out from his arms. She held his face and seriously said, “Big brother, summon a doctor over for me.”

Zhao Jie's thin lips were lightly pursed. He didn't say a word.

Wei Luo sat up, tilted her forehead against his so they were touching, and slowly said, “Summon a doctor... to examine me. See if I...” can't get pregnant. The more she thought, the more dejected she felt. Her small lips flattened. She almost wanted to cry. If this was true, she didn't know how to face Empress Chen or Zhao Jie.

Zhao Jie kissed her lips and blocked the second half of her sentence. After they kissed for a while, he finally let her go and said, “Little fool. How do you know for certain that you're the

problem? Perhaps, the problem is with my body?”

Wei Luo stared at him with red eyes. A long time later, she finally said, “All the more reason to see a doctor!”

Zhao Jie sighed and brought her into his arms again. He didn’t say if he would summon a doctor or not. This made Wei Luo feel increasingly uncertain.

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Several days later, Wei Luo waited at home until Zhao Jie returned from Shen Ji Barracks. She ran over to him and said, “I want to go out.”

Zhao Jie lowered his gaze to look at her. The young girl had probably waited for him for a long time. Her cheeks had become pink from being heated by the sunlight and there was a thin layer of sweat on the tip of her nose. He didn’t know how long she had been standing outside. Zhao Jie took out a handkerchief and wiped her sweat for her. He asked, “Why did you want to go out? Don’t you dislike summer days the most? Today is hotter than usual. Go out on another day.”

Wei Luo shook her head. She showed a serious expression on her small face as if she had made a monumental decision. “You won’t agree to summon a doctor for me, so I can only visit the medical building. Even if you don’t agree, I’m still going to go there today.”

Zhao Jie’s hand paused and he stared at Wei Luo.

Wei Luo went around him and seriously said, “I’m going out.”

However, she hadn’t even taken two steps before Zhao Jie picked her up by her waist and place her on his shoulder. Gobsmacked, Wei Luo tightly clutched Zhao Jie’s back. Her head felt woozy. “What are you doing?”

Zhao Jie stabilized her body with one hand and used the other hand to firmly slap her butt. Feeling as if he was getting a headache, he said, “It’s already dark out. Even if you go to the

medical building right now, it'll be closed. Be good. I'll summon a doctor tomorrow."

Wei Luo had a stomach full of grievances. She didn't say a single word in reply.

Right after Zhao Jie put her down on arhat couch, she jumped up and ended up fiercely collided against Zhao Jie's forehead. Great, not only did her butt hurt, even her head felt painful!

Zhao Jie dampened a towel and held it against Wei Luo's forehead. The words, "Let's see if you'll continue to be disobedient" was clearly written on his face.

Wei Luo was physically and emotionally exhausted. She stretched her hand out and grabbed Zhao Jie's sleeve. She pitifully said, "It hurts."

Zhao Jie helplessly sighed. There was a large red mark on his forehead, but he wasn't as delicate as Wei Luo. He would be fine after applying a little bit of medicine on that spot. "If it hurts, why did you jump up suddenly?"

Wei Luo naturally had to refute, "My butt hurt because you hit me. How could I sit?"

In order to apologize to Wei Luo, Zhao Jie personally attended to her with washing up and changing her clothes. He finally coaxed her into a better mood. Wrapped in Zhao Jie's arms, Wei Luo said before she fell asleep, "You agreed. Remember to summon a doctor here tomorrow."

Zhao Jie stroked her hair and said, "En, go to sleep."

The reason why Zhao Jie wouldn't agree to summon a doctor during the past several days was because he was feeling uneasy. If the doctor really diagnosed a problem, he didn't want to see Wei Luo's broken-hearted appearance. She was his young girl, so she should be unruly and pampered. Even if she was being unreasonable, she could still say something to make her actions

sound reasonable.

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The steward led a doctor to Zhang Tai Courtyard on the next day in the afternoon.

This doctor's last name was Sun. He specialized in treating female illnesses and was famous for his research in this area. When Doctor Sun came to the prince's residence, he didn't inappropriately look around. He couldn't help feeling more cautious when he found out that he was here to see the princess consort.

After walking into the inner room, Doctor Sun saw a beautiful, harmless young girl on the couch and actually let out a sigh in relief.

He had originally thought that a girl, who could marry Prince Jing, would be fierce and forceful. He hadn't expected that she would be so exquisitely cute. His heart, which had been anxious the entire way here, was put at ease. In a gentle tone, he said, "Your Highness, what do you wish for this old doctor to examine?" Looking at this girl that resembled a jade doll, he felt as if she could be scared just by a slightly loud voice.

Wei Luo dismissed the servant girls from the room. She looked at Zhao Jie, who was nearby, then her gaze settled on Doctor Sun's body. "Doctor, I've been married to the prince for over half a year. But, I'm still not pregnant. Can you examine me to see if there's a reason for why it's difficult for me to become pregnant?"

Zhao Jie stared at Doctor Sun. Faced with this forceful pressure, Doctor Sun stepped forward. He took a silk cloth, placed it on Wei Luo's wrist, and comfortingly said, "It's only half a year. Some couples only have children after a few years of marriage. Your Highness, you don't need to be worried..."

After checking her pulse, Doctor Sun had Wei Luo lie down on

the arhat couch. As he gently pressed his fingers against Wei Luo's lower abdomen, his face slowly became grave.



## Chapter 158.1

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Wei Luo had been watching the doctor's expression this entire time. Seeing the change in his expression, her heart clenched and she nervously asked, "What's wrong?"

Doctor Sun's expression was grim and he asked Wei Luo a few common questions. For example, did her lower abdomen hurt the most when her period came? Did her hands and feet feel very chilly during winter? He continued asking other similar questions. Wei Luo nodded yes to all of his questions.

After Doctor Sun finished asking these questions, he had a solution in mind. He said to Wei Luo and Zhao Jie, "To respond to the prince and princess consort, the princess consort has the condition known as "cold uterus". Her qi and blood is lacking. If she wants to conceive a child, I'm afraid it'll be more difficult compared to other women."

Wei Luo couldn't resist tightly gripping the cotton-padded cushion beneath her body. She instinctively looked at Zhao Jie.

Zhao Jie was slightly calmer than her. He asked, "Is there a way to fix this? Will the method be bad for her health?"

Doctor Sun was after all a doctor that specialized in treating problems that afflicted women. This type of illness was easy for him to treat. As he put away the silk cloth, he said, "There's naturally a way to fix this and it won't have any adverse effect on the princess consort's body. Enriching the blood will only make the princess consort healthier."

Doctor Sun had made the situation seem serious enough. Seeing Wei Luo's nervous expression, he finally smiled and said, "First of all, the princess consort should pay special attention to keeping warm. Don't let yourself be too cold. Second, soak your feet in hot water every day for half an hour. Furthermore, if two acupuncture points, qi hai xue and guan yuan xue are warmed by a moxa every

day, then the treatment will be significantly more effective.”

(T/N: Qi hai xue and guan yuan xue are acupuncture points that's an inch and a half and three inches, respectively, below the bellybutton.)

Wei Luo earnestly recorded his words in her mind.

Doctor Sun stood up and leaned over a small, vermillion-lacquered table with curved edges to write down a prescription. “Your Highness, please also use this lu tai ointment along with the other treatment methods. This ointment shouldn't be used more or less frequently than twice a day.”

(T/N: Lu tai ointment is made from deer fetus and antler and over thirty Chinese herbal medicine.)

Wei Luo had Jin Lu take the prescription. She couldn't help asking, “Will I be able to conceive a child if I follow your instructions?”

Doctor Sun smiled, “It's possible. Your Highness, you're still young.”

Wei Luo asked another question, “How long will it take?”

Doctor Sun said, “This varies from person to person. This old doctor can't say for sure. If Your Highness's body becomes healthier, you should be able to have a little heir soon.”

Wei Luo wouldn't feel safe trusting someone else with this task, so she ordered Bai Lan to follow the Doctor Sun with getting the medicinal ingredients and paid the doctor separately for his diagnose.

After Doctor Sun was sent off, Wei Luo kept thinking about Doctor Sun's words. She immediately ordered Jin Lu to boil water. She wanted to soak her feet and try the moxibustion. The prince's residence didn't have a doctor that was an expert in moxibustion, so they had to find a doctor first. Wei Luo impatiently looked at Zhao Jie. Zhao Jie felt her gaze and walked to the doorway to call

Zhu Geng and Yang Hao over.

“Your Highness.” The two of them said in unison.

Zhao Jie said, “I’ll give you one day. Bring over all of the capital’s doctors that are experts in moxibustion here.”

The two of them froze for a moment. It would be difficult to just walk through the entire capital in one day, much less look for all of the moxibustion doctors. However, when they raised their heads and saw Zhao Jie’s solemn expression that didn’t show the slightest hint that he was joking, they lowered the heads and said, “Understood. This subordinate will leave right now.”

When Zhao Jie walked back to the room, Wei Luo was already sitting on the couch and soaking her feet. Seeing that he had return, she asked, “Did you send people to look?”

Zhao Jie nodded and sat down by Wei Luo’s side. “Can you stop worrying now?”

Wei Luo curved her eyes and nodded. But, she quickly became depressed again. Her small face twisted as she asked Zhao Jie, “What if my health doesn’t improve? What if I can’t ever have a child?”

Zhao Jie held her hands in his hands and matter-of-factly said, “Then, you won’t give birth to a child.”

Wei Luo incredulously looked at him, “But you have to have a child. The empress has wanted a grandson for such a long time.”

Zhao Jie tilted his head and looked at her with an eyebrow raised.

Wei Luo took her hands out of his and traced the edge of the couch. After she considered for a long time, she finally decided and said, “You can’t have a concubine or have any other women.” She pursed her pink lips. Her voice was slightly choked with emotion as she said, “If you really need an heir and have to touch another woman, don’t let me know or let me see. Don’t bring her back to this residence until after we’re divorced.”

The room was extremely quiet. There wasn't any sound for a long time.

Wei Luo didn't realize that Zhao Jie's expression had turned gloomy and cold until she finally raised her head. His expression was so ugly that it would terrify other people.

He asked with gritted teeth, "What did you say?"

This was the first time that Zhao Jie showed this type of expression towards her. In the past, he would only direct this type of expression towards other people. His expression always had a hint of a smile when he looked at her. Even if he was in bad mood, he couldn't bear to say a single harsh word to her. As a result, this expression made Wei Luo want to shrink back. "I..."

Before she could finish speaking, Zhao Jie fiercely interrupted her, "Impossible."

Zhao Jie's hands were clenched into fists. He was so angry that he almost wanted to squeeze the young girl's neck, eat her raw flesh, and drink her blood. She didn't understand his meaning. He didn't care if she couldn't give birth to a child. As long as he could have her, it would be enough. But, what had she said? She wanted to divorce him and could accept him marrying another woman. Zhao Jie really wanted to pry open her brain and see what she was thinking in her mind.

## Chapter 158.2

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Wei Luo regretted her words as soon as she said them. She anxiously stretched her hand out and grabbed Zhao's hand, "I was just casually saying those words. It wasn't my true intention. Don't be angry."

Zhao Jie didn't move at all. He didn't even turn his hand over to hold her hand in his. He only closed his eyes and tiredly said, "I'm going outside to walk around."

Wei Luo knew that he was angry. If she really allowed him to go out without clearing up their misunderstanding, their grievance would only worsen with time. She hurriedly stood up and grabbed his sleeve. "Don't! You can't go out!"

She had forgotten that she was soaking her feet. Both of her feet were inside a wooden basin. She stumbled for a moment before she started to fall forward. Wei Luo closed her eyes and thought this fall was really going to hurt. However, she didn't feel pain and only felt warmth. When she raised her head, Zhao Jie was directly looking at her with an expressionless face. His thin lips lightly curved up as he said, "Don't think that I'll forgive you just because you threw yourself into my arms."

Wei Luo flattened her lips, then she took advantage of the situation to tightly hug him. "You're not allowed to go out."

Zhao Jie looked at her without saying a word. A short while later, he returned her hug and sat down while holding her. He took a towel from a nearby shelf, lifted up her feet, and lowered his eyes as he dried her feet for her.

Wei Luo look at him for a while before she asked, "Are you still mad?"

Zhao Jie stayed silent and only raised his eyes. He was clearly asking her, "What do you think?"

Wei Luo resigned herself to being wrong and silently accepted his anger.

A while after Zhao Jie had finished drying her feet, Jin Lu came into the room and brought a bowl of prepared medicine. This was the medicine that Doctor Sun had prescribed to replenish blood and improve her qi. As Wei Luo drank her medicine, she said to Zhao Jie, “So bitter.”

Zhao Jie was sitting at the bedside and his hand was holding a book with the title “Jin Gui Ji Zhu”. He seemed as if he hadn’t heard Wei Luo’s words.

(T/N: This book is part of a collection of medical books.)

Trying to speak to Zhao Jie would only be courting a rebuff. After Wei Luo finished drinking the medicine, applied the lu tai ointment, washed her face, and rinsed her mouth, she climbed into bed. When she rolled herself into the inner part of the bed, Zhao Jie didn’t even glance in her direction.

So petty. Wei Luo raised her head to look at him. She stretched her hand and tugged his arm. She looked at him with a genuine expression on her snow-white face, “Don’t be angry anymore.”

Zhao Jie was finally willing to look at her, but he only looked at her for a moment before looking away and continuing to read his book.

The servant girls had all left the room by now. The lighting in the room was dim. The only light came from a porcelain lamp that was on the square table that was decoratively carved with chrysanthemums and inlaid with ivory and by the bedside.

Wei Luo sat up. She looked at Zhao Jie and seriously said, “I didn’t mean those words. Big brother is so wonderful. How could I be willing to let someone else have you? You can only belong to me. If anyone dares to delusionally think she can have you, I’ll be the first person to not let her off. You can’t have a child with

someone else either. Even if the empress pressures you, you still can't agree. If you dare to agree, even if that woman becomes pregnant, I won't allow her to give birth to that child."

Zhao Jie looked at her. The more she spoke, the more her words got off track. How did her normal apology become twisted to that direction?

Wei Luo also realized that she had strayed from the original topic. Disregarding everything, she threw herself into Zhao Jie's arms. "Anyways, I like you the most. I'm sorry. Don't be angry anymore."

No matter how hard Zhao Jie's heart was, as soon as he heard these words, his heart softened.

Wei Luo seized the book in his hand and brought it in front of her to read. "What's this? You were looking at this book the entire time. What's so interesting about this book?"

By lucky coincidence, she saw the page that Zhao Jie had been reading. The topic written on that page was, "Women's irregular pregnancy pulse illnesses." She was stunned for a moment, but her heart quickly felt warm. Even when Zhao Jie was having an argument with her, he was still thinking about her. Wei Luo wrapped her arms around his neck and burrowed her head between his neck and shoulder. All sorts of feelings well up in her heart as she said, "Big brother..."

Before she could finish speaking, she felt a sharp pain on her neck.

She whimpered for a moment and instinctively struggled to move away, but Zhao Jie's arms were firmly wrapped around her waist and she couldn't move at all. Although Zhao Jie was very angry and had bitten down forcefully, he still couldn't bear to harm her. He quickly loosened his grip.

With tears in her eyes, Wei Luo rubbed her neck. In her mind,

she thought she was really pitiful. Li Song had bitten her last time and now Zhao Jie was biting her. Her neck's fate was truly full of trouble and misfortune. But, if this would allow Zhao Jie to get rid of his anger, she would accept it.

After Zhao Jie bit her, he stretched his hand towards her to touch his teeth mark. Wei Luo thought he was going to bite her again and moved backward to avoid him. Seeing his narrowed eyes, she slowly moved back to her original position.

Zhao Jie said, "Wei Luo, do you want to try to give me to someone else again?"

Wei Luo knew that she couldn't adopt a confrontational posture with him at this time. She moved forward and rubbed her cheek against his cheek. "Whom can I give you to? You have such a bad temper. You frequently like to discipline people. Your only good point is your face. Other than me, who can tolerate you? I'm still the best option. I like you the way you are and won't be disdainful toward you."

Zhao Jie curved his lips, then he flipped their bodies over so that he was pressing her against the bed. He stared into her eyes and said, "Be good. Say that again."

Wei Luo smiled and said, "Not angry anymore?"

Zhao Jie brought her into his arms and a long time later, he finally said, "Ah Luo, don't say those words again."

Wei Luo obediently stayed in his embrace and listened to his heartbeat as she said, "I was just too worried. I'm scared that I won't be able to give birth to a child. At that time, the empress will definitely pressure you. Although the empress treats me very well right now, she'll definitely blame me in the future."

"This won't happen." Zhao Jie comforted her, "Even if there isn't a child, I can adopt one of ninth brother's future children. Moreover, didn't the doctor say that as long as you treat your body



with those methods, you'd become pregnant soon? Imperial mother is fair and reasonable person. She won't have any prejudice against you."

Wei Luo was slightly comforted. She rubbed her eyes and said, "Let's go to sleep early. I'm sleepy and I still have to go to Zhao Yang Hall to pay respects to imperial mother."

Zhao Jie's hand went inside her moon white sleeping robe and touched her satiny skin. He kissed her and said, "We can't create a child if we just go to sleep."

# Chapter 159.1

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Zhao Jie had been gentle at the beginning of last night. Later on, he had probably remembered Wei Luo's words about getting a divorce and had been intent on punishing on her. Both of his hands had been pressed down on the sides of her head as he leaned over to bit her ear. Each bite was fiercer than the previous one. Wei Luo couldn't endure it and clung to his shoulders while crying for mercy. There were several long scratches on his shoulder and back because of her that still hadn't fade away by morning.

After being tossed around for half a night, Wei Luo woke up the next morning with a sore waist and wobbly legs. She didn't even have the strength to drink her medicine.

Zhao Jie held the blue and white porcelain medicine bowl and helped Wei Luo drink the medicine spoonful by spoonful. After she finished drinking the medicine, he used his thumb to wipe away the medicinal concoction from the corners of her lips.

He asked, "Do you want to skip going to palace to pay respects today?"

Wei Luo raised her large, bright, limpid eyes. She wanted to viciously glare at him, but her eyes showed the love that she felt for him and it wasn't imposing at all. Instead, she only looked cutely spoiled as she said, "Imperial mother would have definitely found out that we summoned a doctor here. If I don't go to the palace to talk with her, she'll have strange and wild thoughts."

In this aspect, Wei Luo was very clever and sensible.

His young girl had considered this matter so thoughtfully. Zhao Jie's heart wanted to pamper her, but he also felt regretful. He rubbed her earlobe, "Do you want me to go with you?"

Wei Luo pushed him away, shook her head, and said, "Don't you have to go to Shen Ji Barracks? I'll go by myself. The empress has

always treated me very well, she won't make things difficult for me." These words were meant to comfort not only Zhao Jie, but herself as well.

Zhao Jie smiled and said, "Don't worry. Imperial mother is a reasonable person. She'll understand."

Hearing his words, Wei Luo felt slightly calmer.

Then, he lowered his head to nip at her lips.

She subconsciously inhaled. The place that Zhao Jie had kissed her felt swollen and achy. She took out a small copper mirror that was decorated with flowering peonies from underneath a large red pillow to look at her face. She saw that skin on the corner of her lip was torn. It was red and swollen and very conspicuous. Wei Luo put down the mirror. Flustered and exasperated, Wei Luo asked, "You... How can I go out like this?"

Zhao Jie chuckled, "You can use lipstick to cover it later."

This was her only option. Wei Luo called Yun Gua and Yu Suo inside to assist her in changing her clothes. The weather was cool today because it had rained yesterday. Wei Luo selected a pleated skirt with pearls sewn into an eight-treasure-style pattern and a soft red top. She also had a sachet embroidered with a scroll pattern and a turquoise squirrel waist accessory tied to her waist sash. All in all, she looked refreshing and beautiful.

She sat at the black dressing table that was outlined in gold and had Yu Suo arranged her hair into a ling yun hairstyle. She rarely applied powder to her face when she went out. Her skin was naturally good. Even without applying makeup, her skin was as eye-catching and as lustrous as gems. Most of the time, she would be done after applying eyebrow powder.

However, after she carefully applied a layer of white powder today, she picked up the rouge that been made from pomegranates and lightly dabbed her lips with it. When she was finished, the

torn part of her lips wasn't as noticeable anymore.

After she was dressed and was done with her makeup, she unexpectedly saw that Zhao Jie had stopped by the entrance. His phoenix eyes stared at her with an unfathomable gaze.

Wei Luo asked, "What's wrong?"

Zhao Jie raised his hand, but he resisted the urge to wipe off her lipstick in the end. He only said, "Remember to wear your veil hat when going out. You're not allowed to let other men see your face." After their wedding, Zhao Jie's possessiveness of Wei Luo had only increased. Seeing Wei Luo wearing makeup and dressed up so beautifully, he felt worried.

Wei Luo rolled her eyes. "I'm going to the palace to see the empress. Why would I see other men?"

Zhao Jie ordered Jin Lu to bring a veil hat and he personally put it on her head. He looked at her at again before allowing her to leave the residence.

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Wei Luo found out that Empress Chen wasn't at Zhao Yang Hall after she arrived at Qing Xi Palace. Instead, the empress had gone to palace's training field to practice her equestrianism.

Wei Luo didn't find this strange. Empress Chen came from a general's family. In addition, horse riding and archery was part of her previous profession. No one would dare to stop her when she occasionally wanted to practice these skills.

When Wei Luo arrived at the training field, there were several dozens of guards by the entrance. A person with an elegant appearance and an unrestrained demeanor galloped past them. There was the loud sound of the horse's hooves striking the ground. Empress Chen was holding a bow decorated with animal horns. She placed an arrow into the bow and aimed the arrow at a target that was over a hundred steps away. Her movements were as

natural and unforced as moving clouds and flowing water.

Wei Luo saw her hand releasing the arrow. The next second later, the arrow was firmly shot into the red spot on the target!

On the viewing platform, Zhao Liuli couldn't resist standing up and cheered, "Imperial mother's archery is so accurate!" Zhao Liuli's health wasn't good and the doctors had said she wasn't suitable for riding horses or shooting arrows. As a result, she could only sit here as a spectator.

Empress Chen went around the training field once before coming back. She stopped by Wei Luo and said with a smile, "Ah Luo, you know how to ride a horse, right? Do you want to have a match with this empress?"

Wei Luo knew her own abilities. She didn't dare to display her slight skill before an expert, so she tactfully declined, "I haven't brought riding clothes today. I'm afraid I can't compete with imperial mother."

Empress Chen didn't put her in a difficult spot. She said it was fine with a smile, rode the horse back to the archery range, and practiced shooting a few more arrows. One after another, her arrows struck the center of the targets.

Wei Luo caught a glimpse of Emperor Chong Zhen standing at the entrance from her peripheral vision. He was wearing a dragon robe. He had probably just returned from the imperial court and hadn't had time to change to another robe before coming here.

Emperor Chong's gaze was fixated on Empress Chen and his eyes followed Empress Chen's every moment. His hands were behind his back. He seemed as if he was recalling a distant memory from decades ago when he had look upon a powerful army. Unfortunately, that period of time was forever gone. It had long been grinded into fragments by time and imperial power. When he finally woke up to reality and saw the truth, there were many matters that couldn't be compensated.

Wei Luo looked away. She walked over to sit down by Zhao Liuli's side and asked, "Why made imperial mother want to practice equestrian archery?"

Zhao Liuli glanced at the emperor that was standing by the training area's entrance before picking up a bamboo ladle on the table to pour Wei Luo a bowl of sour plum soup. "Today is maternal grandfather's birthday. Maternal grandfather retired from his position and returned to the countryside a decade ago. Imperial mother hasn't seen him since then."

After hearing this, Wei Luo somewhat understood. Empress Chen's father had once been a famous, outstanding general. Because the general's meritorious serve was too great, Emperor Chong felt threatened and had suppressed House Chen. Empress Chen's father had probably been forced to retire.

No wonder Empress Chen didn't seem to be in a good mood today.

## Chapter 159.2

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Wei Luo and Zhao Liuli continued talking. She eventually asked Liuli about her wedding with Yang Zhen. Zhao Liuli looked embarrassed, but there was a smile in her eyes. “Imperial mother doesn’t want to be separated from me. She wants me to stay with her for a bit longer. So, my wedding will be May of next year.”

Zhao Liuli would be eighteen years old next year. This age was slightly old to be getting married. However, she was a princess with a noble status, so it could be considered reasonable. It was only that Yang Zhen was quite pitiful. He had to wait another year before he could marry his fiancée.

A short while later, Empress Chen finished practicing equestrian archery and returned. She took a handkerchief that was embroidered with dogwood flowers from a place servant. As she wiped her sweat, she asked the two of them, “What are you two girls talking about? This empress sees that Liuli’s face has turned red.”

Zhao Liuli wouldn’t allow Wei Luo to tell, so Wei Luo only faintly smiled and stayed silent.

It wasn’t suitable for Zhao Liuli to stay outside for too long. Not much later, she was sent back to Chen Hua Hall by a mama.

After Zhao Liuli left, Empress Chen picked up Liuli’s small, white and blue porcelain bowl and drank a few sips of sour plum soup. She looked at Wei Luo and said, “This empress already knows about Chang Sheng and your matter.”

Wei Luo subconsciously straightened her back. Sitting upright and still, she said, “Imperial mother, I also have words that I want to say with you about this matter.”

Empress Chen could guess what she wanted to say and interrupted her. She indicated that she didn’t need to worry by

saying, “Since you need to improve your health, this empress will have people deliver nourishing medicinal herbs. The medicinal herbs available outside of the palace aren’t as comprehensive as inside the palace. If you’re lacking in anything, tell this empress. There’s no need to be polite with this empress.”

Seeing that Wei Luo was startled and seemed confused, she lightly laughed and said, “Previously, this empress was too insistent and put you in a difficult position. Now, that this empress knows it’s because your health isn’t good and the matter can’t be rushed. It’s more important to focus on improving your health first.”

Wei Luo opened and closed her mouth before she finally said, “Imperial mother, aren’t you anxious about having a grandson?”

Empress Chen honestly said, “Of course. But is there any use in this empress feeling anxious? There’s nothing that can be done. This empress can’t force Chang Sheng to accept concubines.” The empress was an open-minded person that wouldn’t stubbornly insist something like that.

“Besides, if this really happened, not only would Chang Sheng object to this empress’s action, so would you. This empress has no desire to do such an arduous and thankless task.”

Wei Luo hadn’t expected that Empress Chen would be so open-minded. On the contrary, her initial worries had been unnecessary. She was very moved by Empress Chen’s words. She went forward and knelt down to sit next to Empress Chen. She looked like a sweet, obedient child. This was the first time she acted so intimate. “Imperial mother, you treat me so well. Older brother Prince Jing and me will definitely be very filial towards you in the future.”

Empress Chen very naturally hugged her and stroked her hair like a mother doting on her daughter. She said with a smile, “Hmm, if this empress didn’t say these words, were you deciding



to not be filial towards this empress in the future?”

Wei Luo shook her head and honestly said, “I’ll still be filial, but I probably won’t be whole-heartedly filial.”

Empress Chen laughed without restraint. She like forthright girls like Wei Luo the most. She had long become annoyed with seeing the sham gestures of politeness in the imperial harem.

Wei Luo and Empress Chen talked for a while. An hour passed without them noticing.

Wei Luo looked towards the training area’s entrance. Emperor Chong Zhen had already left.

Seeing that it wasn’t early anymore, just as Wei Luo was about to stand up and bid farewell, a palace servant wearing a green round-neck robe rushed over here and said to the empress, “Your Majesty, seventh princess and the two female officials that teach etiquette have fallen into a dispute. Seventh princess is about to punish the female officials.”

Empress Chen faintly furrowed her eyebrows and said, “What happened?”

The palace servant reported the matter to the empress in full detail. It wouldn’t be good for Wei Luo to continue to listen, so she tactfully left the training area.

When she reached the entrance, the wind stirred up the dust and dust blew into Wei Luo’s eye. She stopped walking and furrowed her eyebrows in discomfort.

Jin Lu asked, “Miss, what happened?”

Wei Luo said, “Dust blew into my eye. Jin Lu, help me blow it out.”

Jin Lu carefully looked at her eyes, and gently blew at Wei Luo’s left eye. “Miss, is that better?”

Wei Luo couldn’t resist rubbing her eye. Her eyes were red and

her eye didn't feel better until a while later. She finally said, "It's okay. Let's continue walking."

As soon as she looked up, she saw a handsome soldier wearing scale armor that went past his waist at the entrance. His bright eyes were looking at her through his pointed iron helmet. However, his gaze was a bit too excessively frank and made her feel uncomfortable.

He didn't return to his senses until a nearby person called out, "Military Officer Chen". He smiled at Wei Luo before looking away.

Wei Luo didn't notice his smile, much less take it seriously. After leaving the training area, she departed from the palace.

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Recently, Wei Luo had eaten many nourishing herbal supplements and drank numerous tonics. In addition to the ginseng and angelica sent by Empress Chen, there had been the fleeceflower root and caterpillar fungus Zhao Jie had sent people to Suzhou find and bring back. The money spent on just one day's worth of Wei Luo's herbal supplements would be enough for a normal family to buy a lifetime of rice.

However, it was difficult to avoid not getting tired of eating the herbal supplements. So, Zhao Jie had the cooks to figure out ways to incorporate the herbal supplements into their meals. In order to nourish her body faster, Wei Luo didn't complain much. She usually drank whatever was made for her to drink.

And so, three months passed like this. Wei Luo's little face became rosy and lustrous. She became even more beautiful than before. It could be seen that Doctor Sun's words were very reasonable. It was very important for a woman to enrich the blood and qi. She would be a huge disadvantage if her qi and blood were deficient.

Right now, it was late autumn. The ground was covered in a golden layer of ginkgo leaves in the outside courtyard. Outside, there was the sound of the chilly wind blowing by. Inside, Wei Luo was sitting in Zhao Jie's embrace. There was a slice of ginseng in her mouth and she was currently reading an invitation card in her hand to House Chen's Marquis Guang Xin's grandson one-month-old birthday celebration.

Marquis Guang Xin was a distant cousin of Empress Chen and they only had the slightest bit of familial connection. However, Emperor Chong Zhen had suppressed the House Chen greatly back then and this Marquis Guang Xin didn't have any true power. By the time the title of marquis had reached this current generation, it might be that family's last generation. They completely depended on their family's territory to support them. They probably wouldn't be able support themselves for much longer. For the sake of the next generation, their only choice was to seek connection and cling to a powerful person like Zhao Jie.

Wei Luo casually flipped over the invitation and asked for Zhao Jie's opinion, "Do you want to go?"

Zhao Jie increasingly liked to touch Wei Luo's little face. Her satiny face was fairer than a peeled hard-boiled egg. He unconcernedly said, "Didn't you say you were bored yesterday? It'll be good for you to go out and relieve your boredom."

Wei Luo considered for a moment, "Then, let's go. I'll have Jin Lu prepare a gift." After saying this, she wanted to jump down from Zhao Jie's lap, but Zhao Jie stopped her by holding onto her waist and pressed her back down to her original position. She tilted her head and asked, "Is there something else?"

Zhao Jie's hand slipped into her shirt. His palm caressed her satiny skin that felt like tasty, succulent, tender tofu. He lowered his head and buried his face between Wei Luo's shoulder and neck and sniffed the scent of her neck. "You've been eating herbal supplements for so long, let me see if you've grown bigger here."

Wei Luo hurriedly stopped his hand and scolded him for being indecent. “It’s still daytime!” Besides, he knew why she was eating supplements. There was no reason for him to say nonsense.

But, Zhao Jie didn’t care if it was daytime or nighttime. He placed Wei Luo onto a small, vermillion-lacquered table with curved edges, removed her clothes, and his hand went inside her pink undergarment embroidered with golden thread. He pushed the cloth away and sucked that spot.

Wei Luo didn’t want to be heard by the servant girls that were standing outside at the doorway. She raised her hand and muffled her voice with the back of her hand. Her other hand tightly clutched the edge of the table. She quietly said, “Don’t bite. It hurts...”

Zhao Jie seemed as if he deliberately wanted to tease her. Although he loosened his grip, his mouth started to slowly move downwards.

Wei Luo’s entire body stretched taut and involuntarily lightly trembled. She had to suppress her voice. She couldn’t make any sound that was too loud. She was as pitiful as a bullied kitten. A long time later, her body softened and she collapsed onto Zhao Jie’s shoulder while quietly panting. Her eyes were covered in a thin layer of misty tears. She looked both pitiful and cute.

Zhao Jie held her head to kiss her and forced her to sample the taste of herself.

He kissed Wei Luo until her body softened even more and she felt light-headed. When she had slightly returned to her senses, Zhao Jie was carrying her into the study.

## Chapter 159.3

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October 8th was Marquis Guang Xin's grandson's one month old birthday.

Wei Luo had sat in front of her mirror and vanity case for an hour to tidy up before changing her clothes. When she was leaving the residence with Zhao Jie, he stared at her for a long time before he slowly reached his hand out to hold her hand and said, "Let's go."

Once they were inside the carriage, Wei Luo curiously asked, "What were you looking at before?"

Zhao Jie was sitting across from her and leaning back against the carriage wall. He was smiling strangely as he looked at her. "I was looking at my beautiful Ah Luo. I was almost reluctant to bring her outside today."

Wei Luo was wearing a captivating, short red top that was embroidered with a pattern of branching plum blossoms in Su style. The top was paired with a flowing, green skirt. Normally, pairing green and red together was very tacky. However, these colors were complementary when worn by Wei Luo. Not only was it not tacky, it showed lively delicateness. In addition, she had recently been eating herbal supplements every day to improve her health. She didn't look like a married woman. If she said she was fourteen or fifteen\*, people would believe her. When Zhao Jie stood next to her, it would make people suspect that he was a cradle robber.

\* (T/N: Wei Luo is currently sixteen years old, so I'm not sure why this is noteworthy.)

When they arrived at the marquis's residence's receiving room and met the marquis and his wife, everyone's gazes repeatedly moved back and forth between Wei Luo and Zhao Jie as expected. After the group of people greeted the prince, there was a delay

before they finally greeted Wei Luo as the princess consort. They were afraid of addressing her by the wrong title.

After Wei Luo presented their congratulatory gift, she followed Marchioness Guang Xin to the inner court.

Marchioness Guang Xin was sixty years old this year. She was humble and respectful when she spoke to Wei Luo, "Princess consort, please follow me."

As Wei Luo followed behind her, their conversation consisted of perfunctory words.

After they went through a corner of the corridor and passed through a small flowerbed, Chun Hui Hall was in front of them. The female guests were being received here today. When they arrived in the main room, there were already many people sitting down. There were unfamiliar faces and also familiar faces. One after another, they came forward to salute Wei Luo. Wei Luo greeted them with a smile. Unexpectedly, someone behind her suddenly said, "Greetings Your Highness."

Wei Luo turned around and slightly froze when she saw Wei Bao Shan.

Wei Bao Shan's hair was currently combed into a madam's hairstyle. Her figure was also somewhat more full-bodied than when she had been an unmarried girl.

Wei Luo hadn't seen her in long time and didn't know that she was already married. She looked at Wei Bao Shan in surprise for a few extra moments. Wei Luo couldn't be blamed for not knowing this information. No one in Duke Ying's household had told her this news and there hadn't been any rumors. She had been busy improving her health during the past few months and hadn't left Prince Jing's residence in a while. There was also no reason for her to deliberately ask about Duke Ying's household's state of affairs. It was normal for her to not know. She quickly returned to normal and said with her lips curved, "You?"

Wei Bao Shan politely half rose out of her chair and explained, “Wei Bao Shan has become Second Young Master Chen’s person.”

Wei Luo had just recently greeted second young master Chen’s wife, Lin-shi. So, it seemed that Wei Bao Shan had become second young master Chen’s concubine. Wei Luo’s almond-shaped eyes were smiling. Her words had a deeper meaning as she said, “So, it’s Honored Concubine Wei.”

They both had the same last name of Wei, but one was Princess Consort Wei and the other was Honored Concubine Wei.

With her hand hidden inside her sleeve, Wei Bao Shan tightened her grip around her handkerchief. She pursed her lips and was able to force herself to smile as she said, “Bao Shan heard that the princess consort had come and specially came out to see you. Your Highness, you haven’t changed at all. You’re still so brilliant and captivating.” As she spoke, she imperceptibly glanced at Wei Luo’s abdomen. Seeing that it was still flat, a smile flashed through her eyes.

Wei Luo was scornful of Wei Bao Shan, who had jumped here and there as she tried her best to climb to a higher social status. In the end, she had still settled at household with an empty title of marquis and was falling apart. Moreover, in accordance to family hierarchy, second young master Chen had to call Zhao Jie maternal uncle and Wei Luo maternal aunt. Wei Bao Shan’s status would naturally follow second young master Chen’s status and be lower than Wei Luo’s.

Wei Luo lightly laughed, “Oh, really? I married shortly after Honored Concubine Wei entered Duke Ying’s household. There shouldn’t be much of a connection between us. I’m surprised that you would specially come here to see me.”

Wei Bao Shan’s expression changed. She hadn’t expected that Wei Luo would speak so frankly.

Second young master Chen’s main wife was a shrewish person.

Unfortunately for her and her husband, second young master Chen was a playboy. Every time he saw a beautiful girl, he would want to bring back home. He was a man that couldn't control his lower body.

A few days after Wei Bao Shan had bumped into second young master Chen in Duke Ying's residence and caught his eye, he had sent gifts to Duke Ying and said he wanted her as a concubine. After Second Madam Song-shi sent people to investigate about Marquis Guang Xin's household's situation, she agreed the next day. At the time, Wei Bao Shan was impatient to break away from Duke Ying's household, so she didn't disagree either. Moreover, Wei Bao Shan believed that she was beautiful woman and that she was special in Second Young Master Chen's heart.

However, after she came to Marquis Guang Xian's residence, she found out that her belief was completely wrong. Not only did the main wife make things deliberately difficult for her, second young master Chen would bring more women back to the residences at irregular intervals. The rear court was a complete mess. Her life back at Duke Ying's household was more comfortable in comparison.

Wei Bao Shan had heard that Wei Luo had come here as a guest today, so she came here to see her. After all, at the very least, they had come from the same household. In the future, second young madam wouldn't dare to make things difficult for her in order to give Prince Jing's household face. However, Wei Bao Shan hadn't expected that Wei Luo wouldn't give her the slightest face and had spoken so unwaveringly.

Wei Bao Shan should have remembered that she had once called Wei Luo a hen that couldn't lay eggs. Did she really think that Wei Luo would have good words to say to her?

Second young madam Lin-shi's eyes showed her disdain. She covered her lips with a handkerchief and said, "Hurry and go back. Didn't the doctor say you were pregnant? If something happens to



the baby, don't blame it on me."

Wei Bao Shan lowered her eyes, "Yes." At the mention of a child, her eyes showed a small degree of pride. No matter how noble Wei Luo's status was, she was still someone that couldn't get pregnant, while she was someone that became pregnant shortly after entering this household. If she had son, she could depend on him to raise her status.

After Wei Bao Shan left, Wei Luo didn't think any further about this brief interlude.

## Chapter 159.4

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Wei Luo sat in the highest position on a rosewood chair as she talked with the other madams. Marquis Guang Xin's family's first young madam brought her son over to show everyone. Wei Luo only held the child for a moment before giving him back to first young madam. It wasn't that she disliked him, but she couldn't help feeling bad as soon as she saw a child and thought about herself.

After lunch was over, second young madam Lin-shi suggested they go to the rear garden to enjoy the beauty of chrysanthemums. Marchioness Guang Xin loved chrysanthemums and fully blooming chrysanthemums were undoubtedly autumn's most bright and beautiful sight. Everyone agreed one after another and the group of women meandered towards the garden.

There were several types of chrysanthemums in Marquis Guang Xin's residence. There were pure white yao tai yu feng. There were also dazzling red zhu sha hong shuang, purple long wo xue, golden yellow ni jin xiang, and so on. Wei Luo was slightly surprised. She hadn't expected to see so many expensive varieties of chrysanthemums at Marquis Guang Xin's residence. She was able to recognize and say the names of each type. As a result, first young madam Huang-shi repeatedly cast sidelong glances at her in surprise and genuinely praised her, "Your Highness, you're very knowledgeable about these flowers."

Wei Luo smiled, "I just happen to have seen them in books." She had a small, personal greenhouse with many varieties of flowers. Not only was gardening her hobby, the flowers were also used to make rouge and lipstick.

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Wei Luo had only stood outside for a little bit before her head felt woozy. Perhaps, it was because the weather was too windy today.

She stumbled for a moment and Jin Lu hurriedly came forward and supported her. “Your Highness, what’s wrong?”

Marchioness Guang Xin and the two young madams also looked over here with concern.

Wei Luo rubbed the temples on the sides of her head. When she stopped feeling dizzy, she opened her eyes and said, “My head feels dizzy. It’s probably because I didn’t sleep well last night. I’ll go sit down at the pavilion and rest for a bit.”

First young madam Huang-shi was a clever person and quickly said, “It’s windy here. It’ll be easy to catch a cold if you sit here for too long. There are guest rooms not far from here. How about I bring the princess consort to rest there for a bit?”

Wei Luo considered for a moment before nodding her head.

Huang-shi walked in front and respectfully led Wei Luo towards the guest rooms.

There was a small footpath behind the back garden. Wei Luo saw the guest rooms after they passed through a moon gate that was at the end of the small footpath and walked to the end of a verandah. Wei Luo was walking slowly. Seeing that Wei Luo’s face didn’t look good, Jin Lu anxiously asked, “Your Highness, are you okay? Should this servant go to the prince and tell him about this matter?”

Wei Luo assumed that Zhao Jie was probably talking with the other guests in the receiving room right now and didn’t want to make a big fuss over a minor issue. “It’s okay. I’ll be fine after resting for a bit.”

However, they hadn’t walked far when they saw two people at the rock garden in front of them. It was a man and a woman. The man was wearing a sapphire brocade robe and the woman was Wei Bao Shan. Right in front of them, the two of them were being intimate in broad daylight. It was an utter eyesore to see the man’s

hand going inside Wei Bao Shan's top. Wei Luo saw first young madam suddenly stop walking. Her expression was embarrassed as she called out, "Second brother-in-law!"

The man turned his head to look at them. Wei Luo finally had a clear view of his face.

His face was slightly familiar. Wei Luo carefully thought it over and finally remembered that this was "Military Office Chen". She had seen him at the training area.

Chen Teng's gaze fell on Wei Luo's body. He was startled for a moment before, but he quickly smiled. He straightened his clothes, walked to Huang-shi, and said, "Older sister-in-law. Then, he looked at Wei Luo with slightly provoking bedroom eyes, "Is this Princess Consort Jing?"

Wei Luo wasn't talkative. First young madam Huang-shi was a tactful person. She only replied, "Yes." Then, she looked at Wei Bao Shan, who was behind him, and said, "There are many important guests here today. Second brother-in-law should be careful with his words and actions. Don't do anything that will make people laugh at you."

Chen Teng looked very obedient as he saluted Wei Luo. "Older sister-in-law is right for admonishing me. I was too rash." Then, he said to Wei Luo, "I acted foolishly in front of the princess consort."

Wei Luo faintly furrowed her eyebrows. She didn't want to stand here and waste her time. She just wanted to find a quiet place to sit down for a while.

Huang-shi could probably see her impatience, so she said to Chen Teng, "Okay, if there's nothing else, you should go back."

Chen Teng finally looked away from Wei Luo, turned around, gestured at Wei Bao Shan, and said, "Bao Shan, come here. Return with me."

Wei Luo had interrupted Wei Bao Shan's happy moment and she was currently feeling very unhappy. This second young master hadn't returned home for many days. Even if he returned home, he wouldn't necessarily go see her. She had specially worn a cherry-blossom-colored gauzy skirt with Su style embroidery, applied makeup, and waited for second young master here. She had finally succeeded in waiting here until he came by. They had only been intimate for a little bit before Wei Luo's appearance had caused all of her efforts to go to waste. Moreover, Chen Teng's eyes seemed as if they were glued to Wei Luo's body. Wei Bao Shan's heart was full of envious hatred. She walked to Wei Luo's side with her head lowered. Pretending that she had tripped, her body started to fall towards Wei Luo.

Wei Luo hurriedly stumbled back to avoid her. Jin Lu swiftly supported Wei Luo and glared at Wei Bao Shan. "What's wrong with you? Why didn't you use your eyes when you were walking?"

Chen Teng had caught Wei Bao Shan and was holding her. With her head lowered, she looked very anxious as she said, "This concubine deserves death. This concubine didn't mean to..."

Chen Teng glanced at Wei Luo. Wei Luo's face was deathly pale and she seemed very uncomfortable. Although he felt doubtful, he still said, "Your Highness, please calm down. After Bao Shan became pregnant, her head would often become dizzy. Please forgive her. If the princess consort is offended, I'll bring her over to Prince Jing's residence to apologize..."

Wei Luo didn't want to listen to him. She felt that these two people were very annoying. Their words resembled the endless droning of bugs. Her mind felt scattered. Just as she was about to speak, the sight in front of her turned black and she fell down without any warning.

# Chapter 160

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The receiving room was crowded with guests that were as numerous as the clouds. Marquis Guang Xin was warmly welcoming Zhao Jie, who was sitting in the highest seat. He held up his wine cup and fawningly said, "A toast to Prince Jing. This household has been greatly honored by the prince's presence today."

Zhao Jie turned the wine cup in his hand and smiled with waning interest, "The marquis is too polite. This prince only came here to accompany the princess consort."

The implication of these words was that he could care less about Marquis Guang Xin. If it weren't because of his princess consort, he wouldn't have come here.

Marquis Guang Xin's old face stiffened. He smiled with embarrassment and said, "The prince and princess consort are truly a harmonious and affectionate couple." But, in his mind he thought, this Prince Jing was exactly as rumors had described him, very difficult to get along with. He had originally planned on seeking refuge with this prince. He had hoped that Zhao Jie would look after his descendants in the future for him, but right now, this matter seemed like it was a thorny problem.

Zhao Jie didn't express an opinion. He raised his wine cup and drank the wine in one gulp. Looking at the sky, it was time to leave more or less. He wanted to say his goodbyes and leave with Wei Luo. He originally hadn't wanted Wei Luo to come to this one-month-old birthday.

Although the marquis's family had Chen as their last name, this family didn't have much contact with Empress Chen. Old Marquis Guang Xin and Empress Chen's paternal grandfather had split their families several decades ago. Up to this day, the two families rarely interacted with each other. Even Empress Chen wasn't

happy with Marquis Guang Xin's attempt at using old family connections to curry favor. When Marquis Guang Xin's attempts had reached Zhao Jie, Zhao Jie didn't even want to bother with dealing with this.

Zhu Geng came inside through the doorway. His expression looked complicated as he walked to Zhao Jie's side. He leaned over and whispered a few words.

Zhao Jie's face immediately sunk. He stood up and said, "Bring this prince over there."

Marquis Guang Xin followed behind them. Not understanding the situation, he asked, "Your Highness, what happened?"

Zhao Jie wasn't in the mood to pay attention to him. He hastened his steps towards the back of the residence.

Marquis Guang Xin, who had been left behind, had a head full of sweat. His line of sight met the confused gazes of the remaining guests. He smiled as he apologized to the other guests, then he also left the receiving room. Just as he arrived at the doorway, a servant had hurriedly rushed over here and whispered a few words into his ears.

Shortly afterwards, Marquis Guang Xin's face paled and he hurriedly said, "Hurry and bring this marquis over there to see."

The servant led him towards the back of the residence.

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Wei Luo unhurriedly woke up inside a guest room. She leaned against a large, decorative pillow as she slowly returned to her senses and remembered what happened before she fainted. She raised her eyes and looked in the direction of the bedside. First young madam Huang-shi was standing near the bed. Wei Bao Shan was standing in front of a cabinet. That second young master had disappeared. He was probably hiding. Jin Lu and Bai Lan were keeping watch and standing by the bedside. As soon as they saw

that she had woken up, they hurriedly called out, “Your Highness, you’re finally awake.”

Seeing that Wei Luo had woken up, Huang-shi let out a sigh in relief. She walked forward and said, “Your Highness, you suddenly fainted and wouldn’t wake up. This one has already ordered people to summon a doctor. The doctor will be here soon. Your Highness, are you feeling unwell?”

Other than feeling a bit dizzy, Wei Luo felt fine. Wei Luo thought of how Wei Bao Shan had bumped into her before she fainted and furrowed her eyebrows. Just as she was about to speak, she saw Marquis Guang Zin and second young madam Lin-shi enter the room. They looked very nervous. As soon they came inside, they kneeled down in front of Wei Luo,

Second young madam Lin-shi said, “This one hadn’t shown enough care towards this princess consort and caused the princess consort to be startled. Your Highness, please forgive me.”

Wei Luo rubbed the spot between her eyebrows. She felt like she was getting a headache just from seeing a roomful of people kneeling. “You may all rise.”

Marquis Guang Zin and second young madam Lin-shi led the group of servant girls to stand up. Before they had regained stable footing, they heard a servant girl from outside say, “Greetings Prince Jing.”

House Chen’s members looked at each other in dismay. They could see the terror in each other’s faces. What must come will definitely come.

A moment later, Zhao Jie strode into the inner room with stormy eyebrows. His expression was grave and stern. Although he wasn’t angry yet, his imposing manner still frightened the people in the room. He didn’t speak and only swept a chilly gaze across the group of people.



The group of people, who had recently stood up, felt their knees softening as they kneeled down again. They were trembling as they said, “Greetings Prince Jing.”

Zhao Jie ignored them and directly walked to Wei Luo’s bedside. He held her hand and said, “I heard from Zhu Geng that you fainted. What happened?”

Wei Luo said, “I don’t know what happened either. I’ve been feeling lightheaded all day.”

By the bedside, Bai Lan couldn’t keep her mouth shut. Her eyes were red as she said in an extremely angry tone, “Your Highness, there’s something that you don’t know. The princess consort was originally perfectly fine. But, after Honored Concubine Wei bumped her into, she fell to the ground and fainted.

Zhao Jie looked at her. There was a deep furrow between his eyebrows. As he considered her words, he slowly said, “Honored Concubine Wei?”

Aware that the situation was taking a bad turn for her, Wei Bao Shan came forward on her knees. With her head touching the ground, she said, “It’s this concubine’s fault for bumping into Princess Consort Jing. Your Highness, Prince Jing, please punish me.”

She would have never expected that Wei Luo would be that delicate. She had only lightly bumped into her and Wei Luo had ended up fainting. If she had known that bumping into her would cause such a huge disturbance, she would have controlled her anger and wouldn’t have openly done anything towards Wei Luo.

While thinking of Zhao Jie reputation, she nervously explained, “This concubine was recently diagnosed with pregnancy and has frequently felt dizzy. This concubine suddenly felt dizzy when I walked past the princess consort and unexpectedly bumped into the princess consort. Your Highnesses, please forgive this concubine.”

“Really?” Zhao Jie lifted his lips without changing his expression and spat out ruthless words, “If anything happens to this prince’s princess consort, then you don’t need to keep your unborn baby either. Since it constantly causes you to feel dizzy, you might as well lose it.”

Wei Bao Shan’s face became deathly pale. She looked at Zhao Jie in dismay and shock.

However, Zhao Jie didn’t seem to feel that his words were ruthless, much less seem as if he was joking. He indifferently looked away from her and clutched Wei Luo’s hand in his palm as if he was holding a precious treasure. When he was looking at Wei Luo, his behavior was completely different from his earlier severe coldness.

After the time it would take to burn an incense stick, a doctor finally arrived. Everyone in the room was quietly sweating. They desperately hoped that the princess consort was okay. Otherwise, no one in their residence would be able to ensure that their lives would be kept.

After seeing that there were many people kneeling in the room, the doctor knew that the person on the bed had a very high status. He didn’t dare to be negligent. He mustered up all of his mental energy to check Wei Luo’s pulse. A moment later, the doctor furrowed his eyebrows. Soon after, he moved his hand away and checked the pulse on her right arm. He was afraid of making a mistake and misdiagnosing.

With furrowed eyebrows, Zhao Jie asked, “Do you have a clear diagnose yet?”

A while later, the doctor finally withdrew his hand and asked Wei Luo, “Madam, have you been feeling excessively sleepy lately?”

Not understanding why he was asking this question, Wei Luo said, “I have been sleeping more than usual.” She had thought it

was because the weather had become colder. In previous years, she would also feel sleepy once the temperature had become colder, so she didn't think much of this.

Unexpectedly, the doctor suddenly smiled. He stood up, cupped his hands, and said to Zhao Jie and Wei Luo, "Congratulations, you two. Madam has a pregnancy pulse. However, it's only half a month old, so the pulse isn't obvious and it took longer to diagnose."

As soon as he said these words, the room became utterly still in an instant. Wei Luo blinked. Not believing her ears, she asked to confirm, "Doctor, what did you say? Say it again."

The doctor patiently repeated with a smile, "To respond to madam, you've already been pregnant for half a month."

The group of people in the room could finally stop worrying. Not only was the princess consort okay, she had been diagnosed with pregnancy. This was an extremely joyful and happy occasion. Their lives were also safe now.

However, the doctor's following words abruptly turned the mood around, "Madam's pulse isn't stable. It seemed as if the fetus has been agitated. To prevent any accidents in the future, madam should be more careful."

Wei Luo's mood had rapidly risen and fallen. But, hearing the doctor say that it would be fine as long as she took care of herself in the future, she let go of her worries. Her smile became bigger and bigger. She nodded at everything the doctor said and ordered Jin Lu to pay three times the normal fee before sending the doctor away.

After the doctor left, Marchioness Guang Xin and the two young madams came forward to congratulate Wei Luo. Wei Luo acknowledged their congratulations one by one.

Because there were many people in the room, it was very noisy

even with people only saying a few sentences at a time.

By the bedside, Zhao Jie finally returned to his senses and ordered everyone to leave the room. He didn't forget to order Zhu Geng, "Watch that honored concubine." He was referring to Wei Bao Shan.

Zhu Geng acknowledged his order.

Almost instantly, everyone else in the room had left. Zhao Jie and Wei Luo were the only two people left in the room. Zhao Jie down at the bedside and looked Wei Luo's smiling face.

Wei Luo was brightly smiling. She wasn't able to suppress showing her happiness. She pulled Zhao Jie's hand over and placed it on her flat abdomen. "Big brother, we have a child. See, it wasn't a waste of effort to eat three months of herbal supplements."

There was a smile on Zhao Jie's lips. He gently stroked her face, "En. It wasn't a waste to eat them." They had fed their child until it finally came. His young girl's efforts hadn't gone unnoticed.

Wei Luo giggled, "I'm pregnant."

Zhao Jie stretched his long arm out and brought her into his arms. He felt tender affection for Wei Luo and joy for their unborn child.

# Chapter 161.1

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After Zhao Jie ordered Zhu Geng to prepare their carriage, he looped one arm behind Wei Luo's shoulders and the other arm underneath her legs and personally carried her out of the guest room.

There were still many people standing outside the guest room. After Marquis Guang Xin had hurriedly rushed here from the receiving room and found out that Wei Luo was pregnant, he had immediately grinned from ear to ear. He thought that even the heavens were helping him. After all Zhao Jie had found out about this joyful news here, he would definitely be more caring towards this household in the future because of what had happened today.

When Marquis Guang Xin saw Zhao Jie walking out of the guest room, he walked forward with a smile across his face and expressed good wishes, "Congratulations to Prince Jing and Princess Consort Jing."

Zhao Jie lowered his eyes to glance at him, but he didn't respond.

Marquis Guang Xin followed after him to try to curry favor and said, "I'll have someone prepare a carriage. Your Highness, please wait for a bit. The princess consort's body is very precious right now. We definitely have to be as careful as possible..."

"Marquis Guang Xin." Zhao Jie stopped walking. His chilly phoenix eyes turned to calmly look at Marquis Gaung Xin. "Your second son and his honored concubine worked together to bump into this prince's wife. Tell me, how should this prince deal with his matter?"

Marquis Guang Xin's smile stiffened. Faced with Zhao Jie's gaze, he gradually felt sweat running down his back. "This..." He turned his head to glance at Wei Bao Shan, who was standing in a corner. He didn't know where Chen Teng, that hoodlum, was hiding. When Marquis Guang Xin looked at Zhao Jie again and saw the

killing intent that flashed through his gloomy and cold expression, his legs felt weak and he kneeled down to beg for mercy. “Your Highness, please spare him. My unfilial son was wrong for acting disrespectfully. This subject will definitely discipline him properly. Your Highness, please be merciful.”

Zhao Jie’s expression didn’t change. He indifferently threw down these words, “Send him to Sheng Ji Barracks. This prince will personally discipline him.”

It wasn’t possible for Marquis Guang Xin to not know what kind of place Sheng Ji Barracks was. It was an important place where the imperial guards controlled the supply of weapons and also a place where Zhao Jie had complete control of the troops. There was also a dungeon specially set up to interrogate prisoners in Sheng Ji Barracks. Rumors said that the cruel torture that happened in this dungeon was comparable to purgatory. There had never been a prisoner that came out of that place alive. Painful screams could be heard from that dungeon every day. Once someone went to that place, it was better to die quickly than to try to survive.

As soon as Marquis Guang Xin heard Zhao Jie’s words, he was shocked to the point that he couldn’t coherently speak, “Y-Your Highness...” Although he blamed his second son for failing to live up to expectations, he wasn’t willing to send him onto the path of death.

There wasn’t the slightest hesitation in Zhao Jie’s steps as he walked past Marquis Guang Xin. There didn’t seem to be any leeway for discussing.

After Zhao Jie left, Marchioness Guang Xin wasn’t able to continue standing. Her body crumpled to the ground.

Everyone was alarmed. They hurriedly went over to help her up, “Old Madam!”

The marquis’s household was thrown into complete disorder.

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After they returned home, Doctor Sun was summoned to the residence to examine Wei Luo's pulse again. There was negligible difference between Doctor Sun's words and the previous doctor's. He also wrote down a prescription for medicine that would help prevent miscarriage and strengthen the body. He left after congratulating Wei Luo and Zhao Jie several times.

Zhao Jie ordered the servants to give Doctor Sun another gift to thank him. The improvement in Wei Luo's health was due to his care during the past few months.

As they were walking in the verandah, Doctor Sun suddenly thought of something. "Your Highness, this old one forgot to remind you about something."

Zhao Jie said, "What?"

Doctor Sun said, "Madam is pregnant. The pregnancy won't be as stable during the first three months and last three months. It'll be best to avoid copulation during this period."

Zhao Jie slightly paused in walking. Soon after, he said, "Thank you doctor, this prince will keep this in mind."

Doctor Sun left the residence.

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On the very same night, Zhao Jie sent this news into the palace. Empress Chen was overjoyed when she found out. She hurriedly sent a message that it was more important for Wei Luo to care for her body. There was no need for Wei Luo to be anxious about entering the palace to see her. She also had people bring over a great deal of supplements meant to prevent miscarriage. Worried that Wei Luo didn't have any experience since this was her first child, Empress Chen specially sent over two mamas that specialized in attending to a pregnant woman's daily activities and diet. She was only one step away from treating Wei Luo like a

goddess.

Wei Luo looked at the herbal supplements that Empress Chen had sent over and furrowed her eyebrows in frustration. “I had to eat herbal supplements when I couldn’t get pregnant. Why do I still have to eat herbals supplements after becoming pregnant?”

Zhao Jie chuckled and kissed her forehead. “Be good, imperial mother is just worried about you. If you don’t want to eat them, you don’t have to. It’s fine as long as you take good care of the baby and yourself.” As he said this, he pinched her little face.

He indulgently said, “Ah Luo is our family’s little ancestor right now. If you don’t want to do something, who would dare force you?”

Wei Luo stretched her hands towards his neck and looped her arms around his body. She curved her eyes and asked, “Really? Will you do everything that I say?”

Zhao Jie laughed and said, “I’ll do everything that you say.”

Wei Luo was very excited. As it turned out, there was a huge benefit to becoming pregnant. She tilted her head and contemplated for a while before saying, “What if I say that I want to eat fish that was personally caught by you?” Other than wanting to eat fish, there hadn’t been any recent changes to her eating habits.

“Just this?” Zhao Jie raised an eyebrow.

Wei Luo sincerely nodded.

Zhao Jie loudly laughed and said, “Look at you, you’re becoming quite promising. I’ll prepare a fishing rod tomorrow and bring you to the back of the residence to catch fish.”

Wei Luo added, “The fish has to be personally cooked by big brother.”

This put Zhao Jie in a slightly difficult position. Zhao Jie’s hands



were used to kill people, not cook food. But, he was willing to make an attempt for Wei Luo. “I’ll do whatever you want.”

Wei Luo leaned against his chest and secretly smiled. Although Zhao Jie was absolutely obedient towards her in the past, it wouldn’t have been good for her to act excessively unruly and indulgent. Now that she was pregnant, all her wishes were considered natural and expected as a matter of course. Obviously, she couldn’t waste this opportunity.

## Chapter 161.2

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Early next morning, Zhao Jie went to Shen Ji Barracks first.

His words must be obeyed. He ordered people to bring Marquis Guang Xin's second son to Shen Ji Barracks when it was still early in the morning.

Although Chen Teng appeared tall and strong, he was easily intimidated. Right after he entered the prison, he peed his pants from fright after seeing what was hanging from the walls.

The walls were full of torture instruments and dying prisoners. There were even torture instruments that weren't fully cleaned and had bits of flesh left on them. He kneeled down next to Zhao Jie and begged for mercy.

Zhao Jie hadn't intended to torture him to begin with. He had only wanted to scare him a little bit. Zhao Jie had him stand by the side to watch as the jailer tortured one of the prisoners.

When a barbed whip that had been dipped in salt water struck the prisoner, the prisoner wailed like a ghost in pain. Chen Teng's legs trembled as he stood by the side. His legs felt like soft tofu. He felt something falling on his face. When he reached his hand out to touch it and brought it in front of his eyes to see, he saw that it was a small piece of rotting flesh. His face immediately became deathly pale. He turned around and held the wall for support as he threw up.

Even though Chen Teng returned home with his life intact, it seemed as if he had become a completely different person. He wouldn't eat or drink. He was absent-minded. Even more serious, he would start vomiting whenever he saw minced meat on the table. In only a few days, he lost so much weight that he didn't look human.

Chen Teng blamed Wei Bao Shan for everything that had

happened. If she hadn't bumped into Wei Luo that day, Zhao Jie wouldn't have noticed him. Thus, he deeply hated Wei Bao Shan. Not only did he drive Wei Bao Shan out of Marquis Guang Xin's residence, he also forcefully aborted their unborn child. Wei Bao Shan didn't have anywhere to go. She didn't have the face to go back to Duke Ying's residence. She ended up destitute and could only wander the streets. A merchant noticed her and sold her to the red light district. As for what happened to her after this, let's go back to this later.

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Let's go back to the day when Zhao Jie went fishing for Wei Luo

The weather was pretty good today. . The sky was clear and the air was fresh with a gentle breeze. In the back of Prince Jing's residence, there was a large lake with water that was so clear you could see the bottom of the lake. Wei Luo was sitting on a stool in the lake pavilion. She saw Zhao Jie taking out an earthworm from a wooden bucket and hooking it onto the fishing hook. As he cast the fishing line into the water with one hand, the fishing line made a beautiful arc in the air.

Wei Luo handed Zhao Jie a moistened handkerchief, "Wipe your hands."

Zhao Jie took it and wiped his hands. He had recently returned from Shen Ji Barracks. He had taken a bath and changed his clothes before coming to this place. He didn't tell Wei Luo what he had done and didn't want her to know that his hands had recently been covered in blood. His Ah Luo should live her life without any worries or concerns.

The fishing rod had been placed on the side. The two of them were sitting so closely together in the pavilion that from far away, they looked like one person. It was an intimate scene. Zhao Jie was holding Wei Luo's chin as he kissed her when she saw that the fishing rod was moving. She quickly pushed him away and said,

“Hurry, a fish has taken the bait.”

It took a while before Zhao Jie let go of her. When he went to check the fishing rod, there was a large and lively carp at the end of the fishing line.

When Zhao Jie rolled up his sleeve, his strong arm was revealed. One hand carried the fish and the other hand stroked Wei Luo's head as he said, “Let's go, big brother will cook fish for you.”

Wei Luo nodded.

Because Zhao Jie spoke as if he was very determined to fulfill her wish, Wei Luo thought he was only displaying false courage. However, when they went to the kitchen, Zhao Jie was calm as if he had already devised a strategy in advance. First, he split open the fish's body and took out the internal organs, including the kidney. Then, he took the dagger that was hanging from his waist and skillfully removed the scales from the fish. The dagger was decorated with a golden hilt that was embedded with rubies. Whether he was holding a knife or a brush, his long fingers and the distinct joints of his hands looked good. She didn't expect that he could be so calm and eye-catching even when he was descaling fish.

After he finished removing the scales from the fish, he used his dagger to cut two slashes on both sides of the fish. Then, he grabbed a container of salt, sprinkled a layer of salt onto the fish, and put the fish to the side. The salted fish had to be left alone for half an hour. He wasn't idle during this time. He sliced ginger and scallions, then he sprinkled them onto the fish. After he poured a little bit of cooking wine onto the fish, he placed the fish into the steamer.

Wei Luo was stunned from seeing this sight. She thought he didn't know how to cook. Why did his actions show that he was quite familiar with this?

After Zhao Jie washed his hands, he closed Wei Luo's gaping mouth. “Are you that surprised?”

Wei Luo hurriedly grabbed his arm and looked at him with her large, bright eyes. “When did you learn to cook? How come you never mentioned this before?”

Zhao Jie chuckled and explained, “When the army was at war, living and traveling in wilderness was a frequent occurrence. If I can’t even do this, how could I have lived up to now?”

Back when Zhao Jie was with the army, his best dish was fish and his second best dish was wild animals.

By lucky coincidence, Wei Luo wanted to eat fish. If it were something else, it wouldn’t have been this easy.

Not much later, they were able to smell the fragrant smell of the fish. Zhao Jie put out the fire and took out a plate that had a colorful pattern of reishi mushroom from the steamer. He braved the fragrant steam from the carp and put the plate onto the kitchen’s beech table. He picked up a piece of fish with a pair of chopsticks and brought it to Wei Luo’s lips, “Try it.”

Wei Luo said, “It’s too hot. Blow on it to cool it down for me.”

Zhao Jie blew on it twice. When he looked up, he saw Wei Luo looking at him impatiently. Her small mouth was slightly open and her entire face looked gluttonous. The corners of his lips slightly curved up. Wanting to tease her, he turned his chopsticks and started to bring the fish into his mouth.

Wei Luo hurriedly lowered her head, bit his bottom lip, and seized the first piece of the fish for her stomach.

The fish was fresh and tender. It was also very flavorful after absorbing the salt. After Wei Luo finish eating the first piece of the fish, she wanted to eat more, so she licked the corners of Zhao Jie’s lips and praised, “Very yummy.”

## Chapter 162.1

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Most of the steamed fish went into Wei Luo's stomach. After they finished eating, Wei Luo licked her lips in perfect satisfaction. "Big brother, make me grilled fish next time." Eating the fish cooked by Zhao Jie was addictive.

Zhao Jie carried her back to their room, used a towel to wipe the corners of her mouth, and asked, "Are you full?"

Wei Luo took the strongly brewed tea that Jin Lu had brought over, rinsed her mouth with it, and spat it out into a celadon bowl that had a flowering lotus pattern. Then, she sucked on a wu xiang pill before smiling and saying, "I'm full."

Normally, you would find fish bones when you were eating fish. But, Zhao Jie had taken out all of the bones before feeding the pieces of fish to Wei Luo. Wei Luo hadn't used the chopsticks during the entire meal. Needless to say, Wei Luo had greatly enjoyed herself. Instead of finding her bothersome, Zhao Jie had also enjoyed feeding Wei Luo.

Zhao Jie flung the towel into a copper basin and looked at her with a sly smile. "That's good. It's my turn to eat now."

Wei Luo froze for a moment in surprise. In the next second, Zhao Jie picked her up by the waist and started walking towards the inner room. She smacked Zhao Jie's shoulder in surprise and anxiously said, "We can't.... I'm pregnant." She had heard the words the doctor had told Zhao Jie when they were walking in the verandah! In order to ensure the safety of their baby, they couldn't copulate during the first three months and last three months.

Zhao Jie's steps paused. He also remembered the doctor's words. This girl hadn't been good when they were eating fish. Intentionally or otherwise, she kept teasing him. It had already been difficult to restrain himself. He had wanted to strip away her clothes until she was completely bare and throw her onto their

bed. So, his face sunk after hearing her words. He put her down on the bed and intently stared at her guilty face without saying a word.

With Zhao Jie staring at her like this, Wei Luo felt as if she was getting goosebumps. Fine, she would admit that her recent actions had been deliberate. She clearly knew that he could only look and couldn't eat, but she had stolen kisses from him under the excuse of eating fish. Her teasing had stoked him into a ball of fire. But now, she wouldn't take responsibility for her actions.

A short while later, Zhao Jie grabbed the red satin quilt that was embroidered with a pair of mandarin ducks and dropped it over her head. He turned around and went to the side of the room to change his clothes.

Wei Luo poked her head out of the quilt and peered at Zhao Jie's wide shoulders and narrow waist. Her gaze went lower and she saw a bulge. With a red face, she said with guilt, "I... I could help you."

Zhao Jie had just taken off his sky blue robe that was embroidered with golden threads and was reaching for his sleeping clothes that was hanging on a red sandalwood screen that was inlaid with silver.

At her current angle, Wei Luo was able to see his lean and strong waist. She saw the muscles on his abdomen stretch taut as he reached for his sleeping clothes. Even though it was delightful to look at, Wei Luo was the only one that knew how forceful and fierce it was when they were on the bed. When Zhao Jie heard her words, his hands paused. He slanted his head to look at her. His phoenix eyes showed a teasing intent as he asked, "Oh, how are you planning on helping me?"

Wei Luo retreated back into the quilt so that only her large, dark eyes were exposed. Her invitation couldn't be more obvious.

After Zhao Jie finished changing, he lied down on the bed and

looked at her sideways. With one hand, he pulled her into his arms, “En?”

Wei Luo’s cheeks turned red. She had done this for him before, but this was the first time that she was one that suggested this idea, so she felt slightly embarrassed. She gritted her teeth and resolutely retreated further so that her head was underneath the quilt.

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A long time later, Wei Luo came out from the quilt and climbed over Zhao Jie to the inner part of the bed.

Zhao Jie hugged her and placed his palm by her lips, “You can spit it out.”

Wei Luo spat everything out. Both of her cheeks were flushed and her large eyes looked seductive. She weakly sunk into Zhao Jie’s embrace and quietly gasped to regain her breath.

Zhao Jie placed on her a soft pillow, then he got up to wash his hands. When he came back, he was holding a moistened towel. He gently wiped away the liquid on Wei Luo’s face. There was a smile on his thin lips as he lowered his head and kissed her lips. “Did it taste good?”

Wei Luo glared at him for a moment and ignored his question.

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When Wei Luo was two months pregnant, there weren’t any significant symptoms related to her pregnancy. It was probably because there weren’t any obvious changes to her daily life. She was able to eat and sleep well. Liang Yu Rong had said she would be feel as if she was suffering so much that she would want to die, but Wei Luo didn’t feel this way at all.

But when Wei Luo was three months pregnant, she learned through experience the suffering of morning sickness.



For example, not only could she not eat fish, she couldn't even tolerate the smell of it. She still hadn't been able to eat the grilled fish cooked by Zhao Jie that she had wanted. The cooks in the kitchen made different meals every day in hopes that she would eat a little bit more. But, she really didn't have an appetite. Even if she did eat a little bit more, she would still throw all of it up before going sleep at night.

In only a short period of ten days, her little face had lost a lot of weight.

This was also the period of time when Wei Luo's temperament was at it's worst. Not only was she nitpicky and harsh towards the servants, she would also frequently have a short temper with Zhao Jie. She would easily get angry and cry if anything was slightly unsatisfactory. Zhao Jie's temper was surprisingly good. He would yield to her in every aspect. Whenever she willfully made unreasonable demands, he would always indulge her. He never showed her the slightest sign of impatience.

For example, when Wei Luo had accidentally broken a pair of red jade bracelets, she directed her rage towards Zhao Jie even though he clearly had nothing to do with the matter. She had incessantly shoved him towards the doors to drive him out of the room.

Zhao Jie had lowered his head to look at her and stroked her head before he amenably left the room. Two hours later, he returned to the room. He was holding a small, red sandalwood box that was inlaid with a pattern of daffodils. He placed the box down in front of Wei Luo and opened it. There were ten pairs of bracelets made of different materials inside the box. The bracelets were made of various types of jade and agate. All of them were considerably expensive. Wei Luo raised her head to look at him. He asked with a smile, "Are you still angry?"

## Chapter 162.2

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Wei Luo wondered why Zhao Jie treated her so well. She felt that she had been deliberately making trouble without any good reasons lately. But, she really couldn't control her emotions sometimes. Her thoughts were completely different from her actions. She nodded and reached her arms out to hug Zhao Jie's waist. She silently buried her head in his chest.

On the same night, Wei Luo wasn't feeling hungry until she suddenly wanted to eat Yu He's sweet and sour pickled daikon.

However, it was already late at night. Yu He was probably already closed. Even if they went there, they probably wouldn't be able to buy this food.

Wei Luo weakly sat on the arhat couch and indignantly said, "I don't care. I want to eat their daikon."

Finding the situation laughable, Zhao Jie good-naturedly tapped her forehead and coaxingly said, "Okay, okay. I'll go over there to buy it for you."

Wei Luo blinked and didn't say a word.

The autumn night was chilly. Zhao Jie put on a black cloak lined with fox fur and went outside.

Zhu Geng felt very sympathetic towards his prince and couldn't resist suggesting, "Your Highness, how about letting this subordinate go there instead?"

Zhao Jie shook his head. He walked a few more steps before smiling and saying, "What would be the use in you going there? She's only asking this because she wants to cause trouble for this prince." Although his tone was helpless, the indulgence in his eyes was very obvious.

Zhu Geng slightly froze from surprise. This level of pampering towards a wife was really too high-leveled. Even if he spent a

lifetime studying, he wouldn't be able to learn it all.

Two hours later, Zhao Jie came back with Yu He's sweet and sour pickled daikon. He placed the daikon and several other small dishes onto a round table and handed Wei Luo a pair of chopsticks. He said, "You should eat now. You didn't eat much at dinner. If there's nothing for you to throw up later, you'll feel even more uncomfortable."

Wei Luo picked up a piece of sweet and sour pickled daikon with her chopsticks. Yu He's daikon was crisp and sour with a slightly sweet taste. She used to think this taste was very strange, but recently she especially liked this flavor combination. She ate two pieces of the daikon and a few crystal dumplings with Chinese squash filling. She also drank half a bowl of snow fungus and egg soup. This was a lot more than what she had eaten during the previous days.

Surprisingly, she didn't throw up after eating this late dinner.

After Wei Luo finished washing up, she put on her sleeping clothes that were decorated with a pattern of scattered flowers. She saw Zhao Jie sitting on a rosewood chair and reading a book. She suddenly dismissed all of the servant girls in the room. Her expression showed that there was something she wanted to say to him.

Zhao Jie lowered the book that he was holding and calmly raised his head. He jokingly said with a smile, "Are you going to kick me out of the room again?"

Wei Luo said, "No." Then, she threw herself into his arms without any warning. She tightly hugged him and sulkily asked, "Am I really annoying?"

Zhao Jie put down his book and placed her onto his leg. He held her small face and asked, "Why are you asking this? My Ah Luo is naturally the most likable person."

But, Wei Luo didn't feel the slightest bit comforted. She feebly said, "I feel I'm been very unreasonable lately."

Zhao Jie chuckled.

"I've been an annoying troublemaker, who constantly gets angry at you. I keep insisting that you do things that put you in a difficult position. Actually, this isn't my intention. I don't know what's wrong with me. I feel like I can't control myself." She lowered her head and remorsefully held Zhao Jie's fingers. A while later, she slowly said, "I'm sorry."

Zhao Jie's heart felt touched by her words. He pressed her head against his heart and said after sighing, "Silly girl, why are you apologizing to me? No matter what you ask me to do, I'll always be willing and happy to do it." He thought of the words he had recently read and added, "Besides, this isn't your fault. The majority of women will become impatient and prickly when they're pregnant. Compared to other women, my Ah Luo is much more lovable."

Wei Luo raised her head and asked, "Why do you know this?"

Zhao Jie raised his eyebrows and picked up the nearby book to give to her. He pointed at a certain page and said, "It's written here."

Wei Luo stared at those words. On the page, it was written that, "During pregnancy, women will suffer from constant moodiness and irritation." The rest of the page continued with similar words. She flipped to the front cover of the book and saw the words, *Tested Treasures in Obstetrics*. Wei Luo froze for a moment. She hadn't expected that Zhao Jie would read this type of book. She asked, "Where did you get this book?"

(T/N: *Tested Treasures in Obstetrics* is a book written by Zan Yin, a Tang Dynasty doctor. This book details the treatment of pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum.)

Zhao Jie said, “I had Zhu Geng find this book in a bookstore. It has surprisingly detailed information.” He thought of something else and added, “So, you don’t need to feel bad. Right now, you’re this household’s little ancestor and imperial mother’s beloved treasure. If I don’t go along with your wishes, who else would I obey?”

Wei Luo’s lips flattened. She seemed as if she was about to immediately start crying.

Zhao Jie didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. He scratched her nose and said, “The book also mentioned that women will cry the most when they’re pregnant. En, it seems like the book wasn’t wrong.”

Wei Luo embraced his neck. She pressed her cheek against the side of his face and murmured, “Will you still cherish me this much after I give birth to our child?” She felt both touched and uneasily fearful by how well he treated her.

Zhao Jie said with a smile, “Ah Luo, I like this child because of you. It’s not the other way around. It’s not because of this child that I like you.”

Wei Luo hugged Zhao Jie for a long time without moving. There probably wasn’t a person who was better at saying words of love than Zhao Jie in this world. She felt as if there had been a jar of honey hidden in her heart. Zhao Jie had knocked the jar over and the honey had flowed into all four of her limbs. Silky strands of sweetness penetrated every pore.

# Chapter 163.1

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When Wei Luo was four months pregnant, her belly started to show signs of pregnancy. It swelled a little bit more each day like a small, slowly ripening watermelon. Wei Luo's greatest pleasure was to stand in front of her copper mirror that had a pattern of four birds flying around a sprig of blossoms and carefully look at her belly. She watched as her belly grew day by day. Everything was fine except for one small aspect. Her body was becoming increasingly rounder.

It was all because of Zhao Jie. He would bring food that was prepared in different methods back home every day. Today, it would be steamed duck with glutinous rice wine. The following days, it would be flaky, rolled pastries with pine nut filling, pig trotters with tofu, slowly stewed milky snow pear soup, and so on. There was only food that Wei Luo didn't want to eat. There wasn't any food that Zhao Jie wasn't able to obtain. As a result, Wei Luo quickly regained the weight she had lost a month ago.

Wei Luo was a girl that strived for perfection. She lowered her head to look at her slightly bulging waistline. Although her body remained slender, she was already dissatisfied with this sight. She couldn't help thinking about Liang Yu Rong's large belly. Don't even mention Yu Rong's waist. She wasn't even able to see her own toes. When Wei Luo thought about how she would become like that too, she felt slightly depressed and also somewhat scared.

Zhao Jie saw that she had been standing in front of the mirror for a long time without moving. He didn't know what she was thinking about, but he could see that her little mouth was pouting. He put down his book and asked with a smile, "What are you looking at that's making you so entranced?"

Wei Luo walked to the rosewood chair, stopped in front of Zhao Jie, turned around in a circle and melancholy asked, "Have I become fat?"

Zhao Jie chuckled and shook his head.

Wei Luo didn't believe him. She felt that he was only trying to make her feel better. She grabbed his hand and placed it on her waist. She continued, "My waist has become thick."

Zhao Jie cooperatively moved his hand up and down. How was it thick? It was the same as before. Her waist was so thin that just holding it could break it. There was only a slight curve at her lower abdomen. It was a very small, barely noticeable curve.

Zhao Jie comforted his young girl, "Our son is in your belly. If he doesn't grow bigger, how will he be able to come out?"

Wei Luo considered his words and felt that his words were reasonable. Her mood gradually calmed down. But, when she thought about this again, she felt there was something wrong with his words. She looked at Zhao Jie and asked, "Why do you think it's a son? What if it's not a son?"

Angered, she directly asked, "Do you only want a son and not a daughter? If I give birth to a daughter, will you not care about her?"

There weren't even any signs of this happening yet, but she was already nervous. Zhao Jie held her fingers that had had been pointed at him in complaint and said with a smile, "Who said I didn't want a daughter? Ah Luo, you clearly know that I want a daughter more than anyone else."

Zhao Jie wanted a daughter. To be more exact, he wanted Wei Luo's daughter. He had thought about this before. Their daughter would definitely be as lovely as white snow and look like a cute rice ball baby. It would be the best if she looked exactly like Wei Luo. Then, he would be able to see Ah Luo holding a little Ah Luo while sitting on the couch when he returned home each day. Little Ah Luo would be babbling as she learned how to speak. As soon as he thought of days like this, he felt satisfied.

Wei Luo deliberately found fault with his words, “Then, are you going to dislike our child if he’s a boy?”

The more he spoke, the more he would be wrong. Zhao Jie smiled and chose to close his mouth without replying.

Wei Luo also felt that she was being slightly unreasonable, so she didn’t continue to explore this topic with him. Anyways, the result would become apparent when the time came. Whether it was a boy or a girl, she would like her child the same amount. After all, this child was a piece of her flesh. All mothers like their children.

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Once autumn passed, it became winter. Each day became colder than the last.

Today was Emperor Chong Zhen’s birthday and there was a birthday banquet held at the palace. Because Emperor Chong Zhen had requested that everything be kept simple this year, the arrangements weren’t grandiose. Other than the imperial family, only high officials and their families had been invited to Lin De Hall to celebrate his birthday.

Naturally, Zhao Jie and Wei Luo also had to attend this banquet. Zhao Jie had ordered people to buy a box that had a pattern of a dragon on each side of a pavilion and a statute of Shou Xin Gong on top of the box. This item was made with precious gems and intricate golden wires. It would be given to Emperor Chong Zhen as his birthday present.

During the birthday banquet, one after another, all of the ministers offered their presents and loudly recited classical longevity poems. This lingering sounds of these poems hovered above in Lin De Hall for a long time.

Wei Luo was sitting by Zhao Jie’s side. Fifth prince Zhao Zhang Zhang and his princess consort Gao Wan was sitting across from them. Emperor Chong Zhen had recently ended Zhao Zhang’s



confinement and allowed him to leave his residence to attend this birthday banquet. On the surface, it seemed as if he had forgiven the fifth prince. In actuality, he hadn't arranged for Zhao Zhang to be responsible for any governmental work. It seemed that he had the intention of giving Zhao Zhang a cold shoulder.

Even when the fifth prince and his princess consort went up to the Emperor Chong Zhen to offer birthday congratulations today, the emperor's expression didn't show much joy.

Gao Wan had given birth to a son two months ago, but her complexion today didn't look as good as before. She probably hadn't taken care of her body after the fifth prince had been put under confinement. In addition, she had caught a cold after giving birth. Even though she was around the same age as Wei Luo, she looked much older than Wei Luo. Wei Luo looked at Gao Wan. In her mind, she decided that she would definitely properly take care of her body after she gave birth in order to return to her original state. She definitely wouldn't allow herself to look like Gao Wan.

Gao Wan turned her head and met Wei Luo's eyes without any advance warning.

Wei Luo slightly froze. Soon after, she smiled normally. It could be counted as a greeting.

But, Gao Wan didn't treat her as warmly as before. She only glanced at her for a moment before silently looking away. She probably knew why Zhao Zhang had been put under confinement. When she faced Wei Luo, she wasn't carefree and relaxed anymore.

## Chapter 163.2

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Wei Luo didn't care that much about Gao Wan's change. Ninth prince and his princess consort were sitting to her left. The ninth princess consort, Sun Rong Yu, was a high official's daughter. She was a lively, charming, and lovable girl. As soon as she had sat down, she politely called Wei Luo, "Second imperial sister-in-law." When she greeted Zhao Jie, she was also natural and unrestrained in her conduct and speech. Wei Luo returned her greeting with a smile.

Zhao Jie and Zhao Chen would occasionally say a few words to each other. Wei Luo didn't have anything she needed to do. When the singers and dancers had dispersed and the banquet began, she lowered her head to eat the sweet and sour shrimp in front of her.

Wei Luo had only eaten two shrimps before she felt it was too bothersome to continue peeling the shrimp. And so, she wiped her hand and stopped eating the shrimp.

She took this time to look at the emperor and empress, who were sitting in the highest seats. Empress Chen was sitting by Emperor Chong Zhen's side. She was faintly smiling and her bearing was completely dignified.

Emperor Chong Zhen was intent on improving the relationship between them. He ordered a servant to pour wine into the ceramic glaze cup in front of Empress Chen.

Empress Chen gracefully declined, "Your Majesty, thank you, but this consort can't drink wine."

Surprised, the emperor incredulously asked, "This emperor remembers that you used to... be able to drink wine." When they had been in the army camps, Wan Wan hadn't cared about formality. She would occasionally sit with the soldiers and drink wine to celebrate. It wasn't like what she had just said. She didn't have any problems with drinking wine.

Empress Chen lowered her eyes. A long time later, she finally said, “This consort’s stomach isn’t well. Ten years ago, the imperial doctors have recommended that this consort drink less wine.”

Emperor Chong was even more surprised. If her words were true, then did this mean that she had been enduring pain every time she accompanied him with drinking wine during social interactions with the court officials all these years during banquets? But, she had never mentioned this to him. Then, had she silently endured the pain by herself after going back to Zhao Yang Hall?

Emperor Chong Zhen grabbed Empress Chen’s hand. He didn’t care that they were under the eyes of the public. His heart felt as if it had been tied into a hundred knots. He softly said, “Wan Wan, this emperor has let you down during the past years. Could you forgive this emperor? This emperor promises to make up to you for all past mistakes...”

Empress Chen’s expression didn’t change as she took her hand out of his. She looked at the officials that were sitting below them and said, “The birthday banquet hasn’t ended yet. Your Majesty, please don’t act discourteously.”

Emperor Chong Zhen felt as he was trying to fight against cotton. No matter what he said, it was futile. He felt deeply powerless.

His Wan Wan would probably never forgive him. The emperor’s heart felt desolate and empty. It felt as if someone had carved out a piece of his heart. The heart wasn’t logical, even drinking couldn’t alleviate his heart’s pain

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When Wei Luo stopped looking at the emperor and empress, she saw that there were several peeled shrimps in her white porcelain plate that had a pattern of brightly colored peony flowers. She turned her head and saw that Zhao Jie was methodically peeling the shrimps for her. After he finished peeling another one, he

placed it on her plate. With the corners of his lips curved and his eyes still focused on the shrimps, he asked her, "What are you looking at?"

Feeling touched, she asked, "How did you know I want to eat shrimp?"

Zhao Jie slanted his head to glance at her. His phoenix eyes were smiling. "Is there anything about you that I don't know?"

Wei Luo opened and closed her mouth. She couldn't find any words to say.

A while later, after Zhao Jie had finished peeling half a plate of sweet and sour shrimp and used a towel to wipe his hands, he pushed her plate closer to her and said, "Here, you should eat it." She previously had an obvious look of wanting to eat the shrimp, but she had stopped after finding it bothersome to peel the shrimp. However, her eyes kept sweeping down to look at the shrimp with an undoubtedly longing gaze.

On the side, the ninth princess consort saw this sight and showed an envious expression. When she looked at ninth prince Zhao Chen, her eyes clearly expressed, "Look at what he's doing. Look at yourself."

The ninth prince helplessly touched his nose. He used his chopsticks to pick up a piece of braised meat and placed it on Sun Rong Yu's plate. He said, "Here, I know you like to eat this."

Sun Rong Yu cast an annoyed look at him. She knew it wouldn't be good to express her temper towards Zhao Chen at this type of occasion, so she only flattened her lips and didn't willfully cause trouble. She obediently ate the braised meat.

Wei Luo would still occasionally feel nauseous. She had been sitting in Lin De Hall for such a long time and the surrounding voices were also too noisy, so she felt as if she was going to throw up soon. She had Jin Lu go over to Empress Chen to excuse her

from the banquet. Then, she left Lin De Hall with her eyebrows furrowed.

Outside the hall, Wei Luo held a lacquered pillar that was decorated with dragons for support. She kept retching even after she threw up everything she had recently eaten. Her stomach felt very empty and uncomfortable.

Wei Luo eyes were red by the time she finally recovered from throwing up. Zhao Jie took out a handkerchief and wiped the corners of her mouth. "If you're not feeling well, we can go home right now."

Wei Luo took the teacup that Jin Lu had brought over and rinsed her mouth. She snuggled up in Zhao Jie's arms. A few moments later, she lightly nodded.

Zhao Jie ordered Zhu Geng to go and prepare their carriage and he returned to the hall to bid Emperor Chong Zhen and Empress Chen goodbye while Wei Luo stood outside the hall to wait. As she was waiting outside, she suddenly saw someone coming over here from the verandah across from here. There were octagonal lanterns hanging in the verandah, but the lighting was dim. Wei Luo saw that the person was wearing a lavender jacket with a pattern of eight treasures in Su style embroidery. Her skirt that was embroidered with golden butterflies was fluttering as she walked. It was Gao Qing Yang.

There was a brief moment before Gao Qing Yang changed her expression when she reached Wei Luo's side. She saluted Wei Luo, "Greetings Your Highness."

Although Gao Qing Yang's expression now looked very natural, Wei Luo had still seen her previously sullen eyes. Wei Luo smiled in response and asked, "Miss Gao, why did you come out here too?"

Gao Qing Yang pursed her lips and was barely able to force herself to smile. "It was too stuffy inside the hall, so I wanted to

come out to walk around for a bit. I'm going to go back inside now."

Wei Luo didn't ask any further questions. She only politely said a few more words before letting her go back inside the hall.

Shortly after Gao Qing Yang left, Wei Chang Hong came by the verandah. He was wearing an indigo robe embroidered with a branching persimmon plant pattern. Seeing that Wei Luo was standing here alone, he couldn't resist furrowing his eyebrows and asking, "Ah Luo, why are you here by yourself?"

# Chapter 164.1

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Duke Ying's household had naturally been on the invitation list to this birthday banquet. Wei Luo didn't have time to greet her family members and had only seen Wei Chang Hong sitting next to Wei Chang Xian at the beginning of the banquet. Wei Chang Hong Luo had left Lin De Hall shortly after the banquet had began and hadn't returned to the hall after leaving, so Wei Luo thought he had already left the palace.

Wei Luo pointed towards the inside of the hall and truthfully said, "I was feeling uncomfortable. Zhao Jie went inside to say his goodbyes to imperial father and mother. We were planning on returning home soon." Then, she asked, "Why are you here? I saw that you left the hall a while ago."

Wei Chang Hong saw that her complexion didn't look good and couldn't help feeling worried. He wasn't in a hurry to go back inside anymore and stood with her outside. He said, "Prince Rui's heir urged me to use five minerals powder. I used an excuse to refuse, then I came outside to walk around for a bit." Prince Rui's heir had been sitting next to him during the banquet.

(T/N: Five minerals powder was what Chang Hong had been addicted to in his past life.)

Under the morals of this time period, it wasn't uncommon for the sons of aristocratic families to use five minerals powder as a popular pastime. Every time there was a banquet, people would use five minerals powder to add to the festivity. But, the type of people that would use five minerals powder had loose morals. They were deviant lounge lizards. Noble men that had even the slightest self-discipline would politely decline from using this drug.

Wei Chang Hong was fully aware that Wei Luo was extremely repulsed by people that used five minerals powder. He

remembered a childhood memory of a man with untied hair and an open wide jacket walking close to them when they had gone outside together. At the time, Wei Luo had nervously clutched his hand and her body was faintly trembling. She had been clearly feeling alarmed and extremely repulsed by this man, but she had still steadily protected him as if she was afraid of him having the slightest contact with that man.

Wei Chang Hong would never do anything that disgusted Wei Luo. So, when Prince Rui's heir had invited him to use five minerals powder, he had firmly refused. However, the distance between them was too small. He had inadvertently inhaled some of the smoke and his entire body had felt hot, so he had come outside to be cooled off by the chilly wind for a bit.

Hearing his words, Wei Luo anxiously grabbed his arm. She tilted her head and asked, "Did you use any of it?"

Wei Chang Hong shook his head. He curved his lips into a smile, "I didn't. I only accidentally inhaled some of the smoke. I was fine after walking around and getting some fresh air."

He lowered his eyes and looked at Wei Luo's slightly curved belly. After he had heard about her pregnancy, he had visited her once and saw that Zhao Jie had her surrounding space tightly encircled by guards. Any unrelated person or a servant who didn't have a specific job wouldn't be able to enter Prince Jing's residence's inner court. When he had gone to see her, she had been lying on Zhao Jie's lap as she serenely slept in the inner room. Chang Hong hadn't woken her up. He had only looked at her for a bit before leaving.

Wei Luo was still worried. She carefully looked him over again. After she confirmed that his body didn't show any symptoms such as having a high temperature, she opened her mouth and sighed in relief. Wei Luo showed a serious expression on her small face and said, "In the future, no matter who gives you five minerals powder, you're not allowed to use it."



She definitely didn't want to see the fallen Wei Chang Hong from her past life.

Wei Chang Hong rubbed her head and said with a smile, "Don't worry. I won't do anything that you dislike."

After they finished discussing this topic, Wei Chang Hong's gaze fell on Wei Luo's belly. He attentively asked, "How's my little nephew?"

Wei Luo's hands were resting on her belly and her eyes were curved into smiling crescents. "It's so mischievous. It causes trouble for me all day long. I can't eat well or sleep well. It's been slightly better lately. There was a period when I wasn't even able to eat anything without throwing up."

She suddenly thought of something. Wei Luo blinked her eyes and curiously asked, "Did you see Miss Gao when you came out of the hall? I saw that she had come from the same direction as you. But, her expression didn't look good. I wonder what happened."

There was a strange expression on Wei Chang Hong's face for a moment before his expression returned to normal. "I saw her."

A light flashed through Wei Luo's eyes. Just as she was about to ask more questions, she saw Zhao Jie walking out of Lin De Hall from her peripheral vision.

Zhao Jie reached her side and tightened the red cloak that was embroidered with camellia flowers and lined with fox fur that she was wearing before glancing at Chang Hong and saying, "Duke Ying is looking for you." Then, he said to Wei Luo, "Let's go home."

Wei Luo nodded, said goodbye to Chang Hong, and followed Zhao Jie out of the palace.

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Wei Luo didn't know that Wei Chang Hong had done more than just see Gao Qing Yang. They had also exchanged several words.

Previously, he had been standing in the verandah outside of the hall. His body had been feeling faintly hot, so he been standing in a drafty place and cooling himself with the wind.

After Gao Qing Yang had come back from changing her clothes, she happened to see him standing underneath the glazed roof tiles. He was wearing a loose robe with a wide belt and his sleeves were fluttering in the wind. He looked very handsome. For some inexplicable reason, this sight gave off a sense of uninhibitedness. Gao Qing Yang couldn't help looking at him for a few extra moments. Just as she was about to leave, she saw him slowly sitting down, lean against a pillar, and close his eyes. His eyebrows were slightly furrowed. He looked as if he was feeling unwell.

Gao Qing Yang looked around. Seeing that he hadn't brought a guard with him, she considered for a moment before walking forward and asking, "Are you okay?"

Wei Chang Hong didn't reply and kept his eyes closed. He didn't want to talk. Although he wasn't feeling as hot as before, he felt lightheaded. He had heard a voice by his ears, but he didn't feel like opening his eyes, so he pretended that he was sleeping.

However, Gao Qing Yang thought he had fainted. She thought for a moment before saying to the servant girl by her side, "Go and bring back an imperial doctor here."

The servant girl acknowledged her order, turned around, and left.

"No need." Wei Chong Hong finally opened his eyes and looked at Gao Qing Yang with a pitch-black and distant gaze. Perhaps, it was because she had disturbed his peace. His tone was slightly unpleasant as he said, "Miss, aren't you overstepping the bounds of what you should be concerned about?"

Gao Qing Yang's kind intention had been misunderstood. She pursed her lips and looked at Wei Chang Hong. Without changing her expression, she countered, "Your upbringing is pretty good

too. You were clearly awake, but refused to acknowledge my words.” She called the servant girl back. Before she left, she glanced at Wei Chang Hong and said, “Cold air can’t remove the heat from five minerals powder completely. It would be better if you use this drug less.”

## Chapter 164.2

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Gao Qing Yang's father also used five minerals powder, so she was very familiar with its smell. When Wei Chang Hong had still been standing, she already had a rough idea of what had happened. Because Wei Luo and Wei Chang Hong's faces were very similar, Gao Qing Yang recognized that Wei Chang Hong was Wei Luo's younger brother. She had only said that last sentence as a kind warning.

Wei Chang Hong didn't reply. He closed his eyes again. She didn't know if he would listen to her advice.

This was the reason why Gao Qing Yang had look sullen when she met Wei Luo later.

The servant girl, who was wearing a dark green jacket and skirt, complained, "Miss, that person can't distinguish good from bad.

Gao Qing Yang returned to Lin De Hall and silently sat down by Duchess Zhen's side. She wasn't the type of person that would beam with joy. Duke Zhen's two daughters had very different temperaments. Gao Dan Yang had a headstrong and proud personality, while Gao Qing Yang was calm and collected. Gao Qing Yang quickly got over her anger and stopped caring about the incident.

However, this incident reminded her of something that had happened during another place banquet. At the time, she had gotten into an argument with Wei Luo, so she had grabbed the peanuts on the table and thrown them at Wei Luo. Back then, she was at age where most children act unreasonably. She was also too spoiled by her family and would get angry at the slightest unhappiness. Later on, Wei Chang Hong had rushed forward, grabbed her hand, and sternly said, "Don't."

Although this had happened a long time ago and wasn't worth mentioning again, it explain why there would be conflict between

their incompatible temperaments.

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Not long after Emperor Chong Zhen's birthday banquet, there was a heavy snowfall in the capital. The thickly falling snowflakes fluttered about in the air like cotton that had been torn apart. The snowfall lasted for a day and a night.

When Wei Luo pushed open the doors to look outside on the next day, she saw an overflowing and thick layer of snow covering the courtyard. The snow was pressing down the courtyard's plum trees' branches. She heard the sounds of the servants traveling back and forth from the courtyard as their cotton-padded boots trampled on the snow.

Wei Luo held a pure copper hand stove with a squash-shaped bottom and flower pattern openwork as she stood at the doorway. Her exhaled breath turned into a plume of white steam. She exclaimed in surprise, "It snowed so much!"

Zhao Jie came outside, took out a creamy white cloak that was embroidered with twinning begonia flowers at the edges, and draped it over her. "You ran out here before dressing properly for the weather. Aren't you cold?"

Wei Luo put on the cloak and walked around the outside courtyard. Because the temperature was too cold, Zhao Jie didn't let her stay outside for too long. After she had stayed out for the time it would take an incense stick to burn, he brought her back inside.

Wei Luo asked, "Are you going to Shen Ji Barracks today?"

Zhao Jie was holding a pair of chopsticks to turn the ashes in Wei Luo's hand stove. "No, I'll stay at home to keep you company since it'll be New Years Eve soon."

Wei Luo took out an osmnathus flower-scented item that had been recently made this year, broke it into two pieces, and put the

pieces inside hand warmer. It could mask the smell of burning coals. She raised her small, flushed face. There was a smile in her eyes. "It's fine if you don't keep me company. Our little watermelon has been behaving much better recently and hasn't been bothering me anymore. I rarely throw up after eating now."

Wei Luo has originally called their baby "little watermelon" because she felt as if she was growing a watermelon inside her swelling belly. Over time, she got used to referring to their baby by this nickname.

Wei Luo knew that Zhao Jie was very busy with work lately.

Emperor Chong Zhen had the intention of establishing the next emperor. Zhao Jie was an unrivaled candidate for this position and was entirely worthy of this title. However, there were a few court officials that were completely against this idea. They had presented a petition to the emperor that said Zhao Jie had a naturally cruel, heartless, and tyrannical disposition. It would be hard to convince everyone that he was the best candidate. How would they be able to stop worrying if the world fell under the control of Zhao Jie's extremely vicious hands in the future? What if there was unending fighting and killing once he assumed the position of emperor? In the future, wouldn't the common people be living in an abyss of suffering and fear every day?

These imperial censors tied Emperor Chong Zhen's ability to take action. He had to listen to them endlessly talk without getting to the point every day. In the end, he decided to temporarily set aside this matter to reconsider later.

Wei Luo knew that Zhao Jie's mood hadn't been good recently. Wei Luo had smoothed out his creased forehead several times when he was sleeping, but Zhao Jie would never show this side to Wei Luo when he was awake. He was pampering towards her as always. If she didn't frequently go to the palace, he would have probably been able to successfully hide this issue from her.

There had been one time when Empress Chen inadvertently mentioned an imperial court matter. Wei Luo remembered her words and had to ask Zhu Geng about it. This was how she finally found out about the entire issue.

Wei Luo sat up straight by bracing her hand against Zhao Jie's shoulder, so that her body could be level with his as she seriously said, "No matter what you do, I'll believe that your actions are reasonable. Big brother, you don't have to care about what other people say. They only say you're cruel because they haven't seen your gentle side. It's not like you're going to spend the rest of your life with them. I'm the one that will be by your side for a lifetime. It's fine as long as I know how wonderful you are."

She lowered her head so that her forehead was against Zhao Jie's forehead. Her bright, black eyes were dazzling as she said, "Anyways, I'll support you no matter what you do."

Zhao Jie looked at her with his deep, black eyes. He didn't move.

Wei Luo started to feel uncomfortable from his staring. She moved back slightly and asked, "What? Did I say something wrong?"

Zhao Jie rose up and pressed Wei Luo beneath his body. He pecked her face a few times and tried to suppress the surging emotions in his heart. He quietly said, "No, my Ah Luo is right."

Zhao Jie's lips descended and touched Wei Luo's lips. He gently sucked her lips. This kiss was gently and lingering without any lust. He just wanted to kiss her. Zhao Jie thought, he would never let go of this girl in this lifetime.

# Chapter 165.1

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After New Year, there was upheaval in the imperial court.

Seventh princess Zhao Lin Lang had married Princess Consort Rui's distantly related nephew, Zhou Yu Ran. Their wedding preparations were very rushed and they married shortly after the Spring Lantern Festival. Zhou Yu Ran had scored third place in the imperial academy's exam two years ago and was currently working in the Ministry of Revenue. He had a dignified moral character and a handsome appearance. It was rumored that Zhao Lin Lang had personally requested Emperor Chong Zhen for this marriage. Furthermore, she had even threatened that she wouldn't marry anyone else except Zhou Yu Ran.

After Emperor Chong Zhen had considered this marriage for two days, he asked Zhou Yu Ran for his opinion in private. Since Zhou Yu Ran hadn't refused, this marriage was settled just like that.

Not long after Zhao Lin Lang and Zhou Yu Ran's wedding, Prince Rui (Zhao Qi Qing) started having private meetings with fifth prince Zhao Zhang. They worked together with some of the court officials to accuse Zhao Jie of misconduct in order to block Emperor Chong Zhen's intention of establishing Zhao Jie as the next emperor. Zhao Zhang and Zhao Qi Qing, each had his own ulterior motive. They were both eying the position of emperor covetously. The only reason they were able to work together was because they wanted to eliminate their greatest enemy, Zhao Jie.

Zhao Qi Qing's intentions were abundantly clear. His heart had been unsatisfied for a long time, from the time that Emperor Chong Zhen had ascended the throne. It had been difficult to wait for so many years, but he had finally reached an opportune time. He couldn't make a mistake and let this opportunity slip. Zhao Qi Qing had never taken Zhao Zhang seriously. Once they finished off Zhao Jie, it would be as easy as blowing dust away to deal with Zhao Zhang. He could easily find a crime to frame Zhao Zhang



with. At that time, the entire world would be his.

While Zhao Qi Qing was daydreaming, he scarcely realized that Zhao Jie had already known about their plans like the back of his hand.

The imperial court was as unpredictable as the clouds and waves.

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During this time, Zhao Jie had been staying home to accompany Wei Luo. His days passed by peacefully and quietly.

On one hand, the court officials, who had accused him of misconduct, felt anxious and frightened when they saw Zhao Jie's lack of response. Did he have a trick hidden up in his sleeve? On the other hand, they continued to recklessly advise Emperor Chong Zhen as if they didn't fear death. They had very conflicting moods during this time.

At the current moment, Zhao Jie was sitting in his study and listening to Zhu Geng report about the recent matters. After Zhu Geng was finished, Zhao Jie's hands were placed in front of him, with one hand over the other. His dark eyes were utterly calm without any ripples. A while later, his lips were slightly curved into a hint of a smile. He thoughtfully said, "Prince Rui, that old fox. If he wants to have a share of the power, he has to see if this prince will agree to it first."

Zhu Geng and Yang Hao were standing shoulder to shoulder. Zhu Geng respectfully asked, "Your Highness, what should we do next?"

Zhao Jie smiled, "For now, let's wait and quietly observe." After saying this, he turned the emerald ring around his thumb and slowly asked, "Which court officials sent a petition to impeach this prince?"

Zhu Geng said, "They're headed by an official named Yang Tai. There's also people from the Ministry of Revenue." Zhu Geng also

mentioned several other names. Most of them were Zhao Zhang's followers.

Zhao Jie nodded and said, "Continue to secretly keep a close watch on these people and report all of their actions to this prince." Immediately after, he waved his hand and ordered, "You two can leave."

Zhu Geng and Yang Hao acknowledged his order and obediently left the study.

Zhao Jie stayed in the study for a while longer before standing up and walking outside, towards the main room.

The weather had recently begun to warm up again and some of the flowers in the courtyard had blossomed, including the flowers on the yu rui trees. The fragrance of the flowers was very pleasant.

When Zhao Jie walked into the room, he saw Wei Luo sitting on the couch that was near the window. There were several sets of small clothing and shoes placed on the small, vermillion-lacquered table that was inlaid with gold and decoratively carved with spirals. Wei Luo's left hand was holding a golden necklace meant to bring good fortune and her right hand was holding a silver longevity lock of a Chinese unicorn carrying a baby. She was seriously scrutinizing both objects.

Seeing Zhao Jie coming inside, she held up the items in her hand and asked, "Big brother, which one item do you think is better?"

Zhao Jie sat down by her side, brought her into his arms, and kissed her head. "They're both about the same."

Wei Luo thought his answer was too half-hearted. She muttered, "Yu Rong and oldest cousin Chang Yin's baby was born a few days ago. I want to go over there to see their child. As the child's aunt, I have to bring a first time meeting gift..."

Liang Yu Rong went into labor three days ago and gave birth to a baby girl. Wei Luo thought that Liang Yu Rong would definitely

feel very weak during the first two days afterwards, so she waited until today to go visit her.

Zhao Jie's hand rested on Wei Luo's belly. He said with a smile, "Then, what about these clothes and shoes?"

Wei Luo was now six months pregnant. Her round belly was like a small, half grown watermelon. When she stood in front of the copper mirror, she couldn't see her toes anymore. Moreover, she could frequently feel her child restlessly moving in her belly. Sometimes it was flipping over. Other times, it was stretching its hands or kicking its feet. If its movement was slightly too much, Wei Luo's belly would hurt. Sometimes, even her calves would get cramps. Wei Luo would often say, this baby is so naughty, she would definitely be giving birth to a boy.

Wei Luo said, "These clothes were all sent over by fourth aunt. She personally stitched all of them. Since she didn't know if we'd have a boy or girl, she made five sets for each gender. Look, fourth aunt's embroidery skills are much better than mine."

Zhao Jie softly smiled and rubbed her head. "Don't worry. Even if we can't use them this time, we'll be able to use them in the future."

They would definitely have sons and daughters.

Wei Luo nodded. It could be counted as approving these words.

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When Wei Luo went to Duke Ying's residence in the afternoon, Liang Yu Rong looked very weak and was lying in bed in accordance to post-childbirth customs. Wei Luo only said a few words with her before leaving the room. It wouldn't be good to disturb Yu Rong from resting.

Liang Yu Rong had given birth to a daughter. The baby was very small with beautiful facial features. Wei Luo had only held the child for a little bit before the baby woke up, opened her bright

eyes, and started crying as soon as her small mouth opened.

Wei Chang Yin took his daughter from Wei Luo. His movements were skillful as one hand supported the baby's neck and the other hand held the baby's waist. It only took a few moments of coaxing before the little one stopped crying. Wei Chang Yin faintly curved his lips and said, "She's easily scared and shy with strangers." When he said his words, his face was full of a father's joy.

Wei Luo smiled, said a few congratulatory words, and also gave a red envelope and a silver and indigo longevity lock. She didn't stay for long. She returned to Prince Jing's residence on the same day.

## Chapter 165.2

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Wei Luo felt like her days were going by especially quick. Perhaps, this was because Wei Luo didn't do anything else to do, other than keeping herself healthy for her unborn baby, after she was diagnosed with pregnancy. In the blink of an eye, it was Zhao Liuli and Yang Zhen's wedding day.

It was currently early summer and the weather wasn't too hot yet. Wei Luo was wearing a charming red, gauzy top that had a pattern of butterflies and flowers in Su style embroidery. The top was paired with a pleated, pomegranate skirt. Her back and shoulders were straight to support her pregnancy belly as she entered the palace.

When Wei Luo arrived at Chen Hua Hall, Zhao Liuli was currently sitting in front of a copper mirror with a decorative design of a pair of mythical birds and flowers. She was wearing an opulent, red wedding dress and headdress. Her hair was black and her lips were red. All the preparations had been completed.

Seeing Wei Luo coming inside, Zhao Liuli blinked before curving her eyes into a smile, "Imperial sister-in-law, I almost thought you weren't going to come."

Wei Luo said, "Today is your wedding day. How could I not come?"

Zhao Liuli looked at Wei Luo's belly. "You're going to be giving birth soon. It's really dangerous for you to come out. It'll be better if you stay at home."

Wei Luo was currently only seven months pregnant. Although her belly looked big, there was still a while before she would be giving birth. Wei Luo cast an annoyed look at her and teased her, "A bride should be crying on her wedding day. If imperial mother see how happy you are, won't she be sad?"

Once Wei Luo said these words, Zhao Liuli immediately tried to curb her joy. She intentionally tried to look solemn, but no matter how hard she tried, she couldn't hide the smile on her lips. Her expression went back to her previous one very quickly. She mumbled, "How am I suppose to cry when I know that I'll be married to older brother Yang Zhen soon? I don't even have enough time to be happy!"

Wei Luo had never heard such honest words. She couldn't resist laughing for a bit.

A short while later, Empress Chen walked into Chen Hua Hall. She was also splendidly dressed. The brightly colored palanquin was already prepared and waiting outside the hall for the princess.

Empress Chen's heart felt reluctant as she thought of how the daughter she had worked so hard to raise would be someone else's soon. Her eyes became red and tears started to fall down from her face as she stood in from Zhao Liuli. Zhao Liuli had only recently said she wouldn't be able to cry, but now tears tumbled down her face too, to the point that she felt a pain in her chest.

With great difficulty, Qiu Mama was finally able to persuade the two of them to stop crying. She hurriedly fixed Zhao Liuli's makeup before bringing her to the brightly colored palanquin.

Yang Zhen had already been waiting outside the palace for his bride for a long time. As soon as the brightly colored palanquin came out of the palace, it headed towards Yang Zhen's residence while accompanied by a chorus of wind instruments. Yang Zhen's home was located in the southwest part of the capital. The palanquin traveled through almost the entire capital as it went from the palace to Yang Zhen's residence. On either side of the streets, the common people had come out to watch the festivity. Emperor Chong Zhen's favorite princess was getting married and everyone joined in the celebratory and joyful mood.

For a long time, Zhao Liuli clutched a jade ruyi as she sat in the

brightly colored palanquin that kept swaying until it finally stopped. She held one end of the knotted red silk ribbon as Yang Zhen led her into his home. Yang Zhen was an orphan and only had a distantly related uncle. So, after the two of them bowed to the heavens and earth, Zhao Liuli was escorted by a group of people to the bridal chamber.

The bridal chamber was decorated very festively in pieces of red. There was a red bed canopy, red candles, red quilt, and so on. To the extent that, when Yang Zhen used the ruyi to lift the wedding veil, Zhao Liuli's face was also flushed red.

Yang Zhen's handsome face that rarely showed any expression finally showed a smile. His gaze was single-mindedly devoted to looking at Zhao Liuli. He didn't return to his senses until the good fortune woman urged them to drink their matrimonial wine.

A madam by the side joked with the other madams, "Our princess is too beautiful. The groom can't look away."

Zhao Liuli lowered her eyes. Her lovely cheeks were bright red.

After they drank their matrimonial wine, Yang Zhen went out to entertain the guests.

The madams stayed in the room with Zhao Liuli and tried to talk with her. She quietly sat on the bed and would only occasionally reply with a few words.

A short while later, after the madams had all left the room and Zhao Liuli continued to sit on the bed, her dowry servant girl, Yun Zi asked, "Your Highness, do you want take a bath and change your clothes?"

Zhao Liuli shook her head and said, "I want to wait a little bit longer." She wanted to wait until Yang Zhen came back.

Yun Zi asked another question, "You haven't eaten anything all day. Do you want this servant to go to the kitchen to bring you some food?"

Perhaps, she was famished to the point that she didn't feel hungry anymore. Zhao Liuli shook her head and said, "No need."

Yun Zi could only give up.

Zhao Liuli leaned against the bed's decoratively carved frame and slowly closed her eyes. Only a short time passed before she fell asleep.

When Yang Zhen returned to the room after he was finished dealing with the guests, the sight of a splendidly dressed young girl that was serenely sleeping greeted him. Her long and thick eyelashes were lowered like resting butterfly wings, her mouth was slightly open, and her nose slightly moved as she breathed. She was probably very tired from today. She didn't even notice when he walked to the bed.

Yang Zhen leaned over so that there was only half an inch between their faces. He silently looked at her before he lowered his head and pressed his thin lips against her soft, pink lips. He gently sucked her lips.

Zhao Liuli finally responded. After she slowly opened her eyes, she saw Yang Zhen's face very close to her. Startled, she instinctively fell back and looked up. Yang Zhen followed after her. He wrapped his arm around her waist and pressed her down on the bright red silk quilt that was embroidered with mandarin ducks.

Yang Zhen's breath smelled of alcohol as he hoarsely said into her ear, "Your Highness, you're finally mine."

For no reason at all, the tips of Zhao Liuli's ears turned red. Perhaps, it was because Yang Zhen had drunk wine. He was especially aggressive tonight. Although he still called her, "Your Highness", his attitude towards her was very different.

"Yang Zhen, let me get up first..." Zhao Liuli said. She hadn't changed her clothes yet.



But, Yang Zhen impatiently blocked her lips. He traced her lips with desire and devoutness. At the same time, his burning hot hand went inside her wedding dress to explore.

# Chapter 166.1

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Wei Luo's waistline became wider and wider. Her formerly small, slender, and seductive waist had already vanished without a trace. Not only was her belly protruding, her cheeks had also become round. The small peaches on her chest had turned into large, tender, and white steamed buns. If today wasn't the day that Zhao Liuli and Yang Zhen were visiting the palace together, Wei Luo wouldn't have been willing to go out no matter what. She felt that other people shouldn't see her current appearance. Before she went out, she looked at herself in the mirror for a long time. The more she looked, the more displeased she was with herself.

Wei Luo touched her belly, sighed, and said, "Little watermelon, once you're born, your mother really has to fix herself up."

On the side, Zhao Jie chuckled. It was probably because Wei Luo's appearance of sighing in despair was too cute. He walked forward to hug her. He nipped her ear and said, "No matter how your appearance changes, my Ah Luo will always be the most beautiful girl."

"No." Wei Luo pushed him away and sternly corrected him, "You can't say that. It'll make me complacent. I only temporarily look like this because I'm having a child and there's no other choice. I'll lose this weight once I give birth."

Zhao Jie's thin lips smiled. He looked at her without moving. With a lowered voice that had a tempting magnetism, he said, "But I'm only saying how I truly feel." In his heart, his girl always looked the best, especially in this moment when she was straightening her back and shoulders to support her round belly. Her petite body was nurturing their unborn baby. The curve in her bulging belly was the most beautiful curve in the world.

Wei Luo called him, "Smooth talker", but her tone was sweet.

Fortunately, Wei Luo clearly knew that Zhao Jie was only saying

sweet words of love and didn't take these words seriously. It was enough just to hear these words.

On the way to the palace, Wei Luo silently said towards her belly, "Little watermelon, your mother has sacrificed so much for you. You definitely have to be safely without any complications. Don't torment your mother on your way out."

She had heard from Liang Yu Rong that giving birth would be very painful.

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At Zhao Yang Hall, Zhao Liuli and Yang Zhen had already arrived a while ago.

Zhao Liuli was sitting on a red sandalwood arhat couch. There was a large, sapphire blue pillow behind her. With red cheeks, she furtively looked at Yang Zhen, who was standing in front of Emperor Chong Zhen and Empress Chen. Yang Zhen was wearing a red robe that was embroidered with a pattern of rippling water. His face was solemn as he respectfully answered their questions.

All in all, Yang Zhen appeared as calmly serious as always with his attention fully concentrated on the emperor and empress. Before Zhao Liuli married him and understood his inherent nature, she didn't have any complicated feelings when she saw him like this.

On their wedding night, Zhao Liuli didn't even have time to change out of her wedding dress before Yang Zhen had pressed her down on their bed.

Yang Zhen had tightly held her wrists and infatuatedly nipped at her ear while repeatedly calling her, "Your Highness." Later on, his voice became hoarse and he called her, "Liuli". Pressed underneath his body, Zhao Liuli couldn't move. She could only tremble and accept his numerous kisses.

When Yang Zhen had thrust inside, it had hurt so much that

tears rolled down from her eyes. She bit his shoulder and sobbed out her pain. Yang Zhen knew that this was hard for her to take, but he couldn't control himself. He licked the tears on her face and didn't stop until he had opened her body completely.

After Zhao Liuli had sobbed for an hour, to the point that her small face was completely flushed and looked extremely pitiful, Yang Zhen carried the weakened Zhao Liuli to the cleaning room to wash up.

When Yun Zi led the palace servants into the inner room to clean up and they saw the utterly disorderly mess on the bed and wedding dress that was so soaked it could drip, their cheeks turned red one after another.

Emperor Chong Zhen had given Yang Zhen a few days off.

During the past few days, Yang Zhen didn't go anywhere. He stayed with Zhao Liuli for three days and three nights inside their room. No one came to bother them in the room, except for when the servants knocked on the doors to indicate that they had brought food and water. Zhao Liuli hadn't known that Yang Zhen would be so energetic. He had probably endured for a long time. All of his energy came out and was directed towards her body once they were married.

They had left behind traces of themselves in every corner of the bridal room; even the window ledge and desk weren't exceptions. Yang Zhen wouldn't even let her off when they were eating. While he was feeding her food, he still wouldn't leave her body.

Zhao Liuli felt that these three days had passed by very quickly, but also very slowly. If they didn't have to return to the palace to see imperial father and mother today, Yang Zhen might not have allowed her to leave their room.

As soon as Zhao Liuli thought of how absurd the past three days had been, she felt extremely embarrassed. Even right now, her entire body still felt sore and she had to be carried on a palanquin

to come to Zhao Yang Hall today. Her legs were so weak that she couldn't even stand up. Imperial mother could probably figure out what had happened. It was entirely Yang Zhen's fault. Why didn't he show any restraint?! Zhao Liuli's cheeks flushed as thought about this.

After Emperor Chong Zhen and Empress Chen finished asking their questions, they seemed satisfied with Yang Zhen.

Empress Chen allowed Yang Zhen sit down, then she sighed with emotion and said, "Liuli is this empress's precious daughter. This empress has always extremely doted on her. Now that she's married to you, you have to treat to her well. Don't let this empress be disappointed in you."

Yang Zhen stood up to say, "Your Majesty, please be assured. This subjects is whole-heartedly devoted to the princess."

Empress Chen nodded and turned her head to look at Zhao Liuli, who was sitting askew against a pillow. Displeased, she reprimanded, "You're already a married girl. Why are you still not acting properly? Go down there to sit so that other people won't see you and laugh."

Zhao Liuli supported her waist and slowly sat up and got up from the couch. When she walked to Yang Zhen's side, she blew out her cheeks as she passed by him to sit at the nearby rosewood chair. Yang Zhen couldn't help curving the corners of his mouth. When he looked at Zhao Liuli, his eyes were overflowing with delight.

When he smiled like this, Zhao Liuli couldn't resist thinking about the things he had done to her. Her ears immediately became red and she looked away.

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Not long after, one after another, Wei Luo, Zhao Jie, and the other princes and princesses came by. The entire family sat down together and talked for a while.

After lunch, the princes and princesses said their good-byes. Wei Luo and Zhao Liuli stayed in Zhao Yang Hall to accompany Empress Chen and talk with her. Zhao Jie, Yang Zhen, and Emperor Chen left the hall to go to the imperial study.

Right now, it was very difficult for Wei Luo to do anything. Empress Chen and Zhao Liuli showed her the utmost care. When Zhao Liuli found out that the baby's movements could be heard, she was extremely curious. She gently pressed her ear against Wei Luo's belly and listened. "Imperial sister-in-law, why isn't it moving?"

Wei Luo said, "It's probably because it's not familiar with you and it's scared of strangers."

Zhao Liuli wasn't discouraged. She started speaking to Wei Luo's belly. She said words like, "I'm your aunt," and "You're called little watermelon, right? Could you talk with me?"

Seeing this sight, Empress Chen and Wei Luo wanted to laugh. Soon after, little watermelon started to move in Wei Luo's belly and stretched out a small foot. It could be counted as a greeting to Zhao Liuli.

Zhao Liuli felt surprised and joyful. "It can really hear me speak?"

## Chapter 166.2

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Wei Luo also felt very interested. She placed her hand on her belly. Little watermelon really seemed as if it was responding. It replaced its foot with a small hand to touch Wei Luo's hand on the other side of her belly. Wei Luo's eyes suddenly felt damp. She had been pregnant for so long. This was the first time that she truly felt her child's existence. She really wished that it could come out sooner and wondered how it would look when it came out. Since it was Zhao Jie and her child, it definitely wouldn't be ugly.

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It wasn't early anymore. The sun was moving towards the western horizon. Wei Luo and Zhao Liuli bid Empress Chen farewell and planned on returning to their respective residence next.

Empress Chen went with them to Qing Xi Palace's entrance to send them off. She rather ruefully said, "Seeing that the both of you are living well, I can put down the worries in my heart."

Zhao Liuli thought Empress Chen was only feeling sad because there was no one by her side anymore. She held Empress Chen's hand and said, "Imperial mother, don't worry. I'll frequently come back to the palace to see you. I definitely won't let you feel lonely."

Empress Chen helplessly said, "You're already married. How will it look if you frequently come back? Rather than hoping for you come to visit me, wouldn't it be better for me to hope that Ah Luo will frequently come to the palace to keep me company?"

Wei Luo said, "Once my child is born, I'll bring the child to see imperial mother. Once you have a grandchild to play and spoil, there won't be a reason for you to worry about not having people to accompany you."

Empress Chen smiled and said, "You're right. I'll just look

forward to my grandchild's birth."

After Wei Luo and Zhao Liuli left Qing Xi Palace, Zhao Liuli and Yang Zhen left first while Wei Luo sat inside the carriage and waited for a bit before Zhao Jie came out through the palace's main doors.

Wei Luo thought Empress Chen's recent words and she had a peculiar feeling. She asked, "Has imperial mother said anything to you recently?"

Zhao Jie brought her onto his lap and fiddled with her fingers as asked, "What's wrong?"

Wei Luo said, "Imperial mother didn't seem happy today. She's probably feeling lonelier in the palace now that Liuli is married. And, she doesn't seem like she has any intentions of forgiving His Majesty. I'm worried that she's feeling too lonely by herself. I want to come to the palace more often in the future to keep her company."

Zhao Jie kissed her small face and said with a smile, "Of course, you can. Just wait until after you give birth."

Right now, Wei Luo's belly was becoming bigger and bigger. It wasn't convenient for her to go out and she might also meet danger on the way to the palace. Thus, it would be safer for her to stay at home.

Wei Luo considered for a moment. She nodded and said, "I previously asked you to arrange for more people at Bao He Hall. Have you arranged it yet?"

Zhao Jie said, "I did this a while ago." As he scratched her nose, he deliberately joked, "How can I not obey Ah Luo's words?"

Wei Luo pouted. Just as she was about to say something, the carriage shook and stopped on the road.

Zhao Jie lifted the curtain and asked, "What happened?"



The carriage driver replied, “To respond to Your Highness, the carriage in front of us broke and is blocking the road. Should we take a detour to return to the residence?”

Zhao Jie said, “Take a detour then.”

Through the gap from the lifted curtain, Wei Luo caught a glimpse of a girl standing next to carriage in front of them. She was wearing a lavender jacket and skirt. This girl was definitely Gao Qing Yang without a doubt.

Wei Luo had the carriage driver stop the carriage again. At the very least, she did have previous interactions with Gao Qing Yang, so she asked her if she wanted a ride home. After all, Duke Zhen’s residence was near Prince Jing’s residence. In addition, the sky looked gloomy and seemed as if it would rain soon. Who knew how long she would have to stand her before she could go home?

Gao Qing Yang thought for a moment before coming into the carriage without acting bashful. After she sat down, she gratefully said, “Thank you Your Highnesses.”

Wei Luo asked, “Where did you go before? Why did the carriage break down?”

Gao Qing Yang was sitting across from them. She explained, “I went out to buy some inksticks from an ink store. I was planning on going home and using them to practice calligraphy. Unexpectedly, one of the wheels on the carriage suddenly broke and I had stop by the side of the road.

Wei Luo nodded and said, “We’re heading home now. Once we reach home, I’ll have the carriage driver drive you to Duke Zhen’s residence.”

Gao Qing Yang didn’t refuse. She sincerely thanked her again, “Thank you Your Highness.”

Wei Luo shook her head and said, “No need.”

They quickly arrived at Prince Jing's residence's entrance. Zhao Jie carried Wei Luo down from the carriage. When they turned around, they saw a person standing tall and straight at the front of the entrance.

In front of the vermillion-lacquered doors, Wei Chang Hong was wearing a bluish-green robe made with ramie fabric. He was as calm and soothing as the rustling sound between pine trees and as elegant as the lofty clouds. The servants at the entrance had recognized him and knew that he was Princess Consort Jing's younger brother. They didn't dare to slight him and had asked him to go inside to sit down. Unexpectedly, he had said no and stood outside until now.

As soon as Wei Luo saw Chang Hong, she was so startled that she came out from Zhao Jie's embrace. She lifted up her delicate green skirt that was embroidered with a pattern of orchids, bamboos, and chrysanthemums as she went up the stairs. She stopped next to Chang Hong and asked, "Chang Hong, why did you come here? Why didn't you go inside to sit down? It's so tiring to stand out here."

Wei Chang Hong showed a faint smile and said, "The servants said you would be coming back soon, so I decided to wait here for you for a bit. I still have to return home after I speak with you."

Wei Luo tilted her head and asked, "What happened that so urgent?"

"It's not anything urgent." Wei Chang Hong took out a bright red sachet that was embroidered with a pattern of a hundred children from his sleeve. He lifted up Wei Luo's hand and placed the sachet on her palm. "Fourth aunt specially went to Da Ci Temple to request a safety charm for you. The charm is inside this sachet. For the time being, keep this charm for your child. Once he or she is born, give it to your child to wear. Fourth aunt says it can guarantee a lifetime of peace."

Wei Luo clutched the sachet. When she raised her head to look at Chang Hong, her lips curved into a smile and she said, "Thank fourth aunt for me when you go back. I'll definitely have my child wear it."

Wei Chang Hong nodded and glanced at Zhao Jie, who was standing behind Wei Luo. Although he didn't look happy to see him, their gazes weren't as mutually hostile as before. Chang Hong didn't stay to say anything else. He started walking forward after saying, "I'm going home."

Just as he was about to raise his foot, the gloomy sky started to rain. The sudden sound of the raindrops hitting the ground caught them off guard.

Wei Chang Hong froze for a moment. He hadn't brought an umbrella when he came out today and had ridden here on a horse. The tall, fine steed didn't care about being rained on. It even lifted up its hooves underneath the downpour.

Wei Luo looked at Chang Hong, then she looked at the carriage that hadn't left yet. She had a sudden idea and ordered Jin Lu to bring an umbrella over. Very quickly, Jin Lu came back and said, "Your Highness, here's the umbrella that you wanted."

Wei Luo took the umbrella, brought the double-ring oilpaper umbrella to Wei Chang Hong's hand, and pointed at the black, flat-roofed carriage at the entrance. She said, "Miss Gao's carriage broke down and she came back here with us. Chang Hong, since you're here and it's raining heavily, could you send Miss Gao back home just in case?"

## Chapter 166.3

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It was just rain. What could possibly go wrong? Wei Chang Hong glanced at Wei Luo. Her intention was extremely obvious, even a blind person would be able to see. A moment later, Wei Chang Hong looked away. Holding the umbrella, he rather helplessly said, "Okay, I'll send her home."

Wei Luo smiled. She reminded him again, "Be careful on the way there. Don't rush."

Wei Chang Hong mounted the horse, opened the double-ring oilpaper umbrella, and tightened his legs around the horse to urge it towards the carriage. He said to the driver, "Let's go."

Hearing his words, the carriage driver raised the whip and directed the horse in the direction towards Duke Zhen's residence.

Inside the carriage, Gao Qing Yang had heard Wei Luo and Wei Chang Hong's conversation and wasn't quite sure of Wei Luo's intention. A while later, she lifted up the corner of the curtain and saw Wei Chang Hong riding a horse near the carriage. The rain was falling fast and heavy. It had already soaked one side of his sleeves, but his handsome face was still unhurriedly looking straight ahead.

Gao Qing Yang contemplated for a while before saying, "My home isn't far away from here. I don't need you to come with me. You can go home."

Hearing her words, Wei Chang Hong finally turned his head to look at her. Separated by a curtain of rain, she couldn't clearly see Wei Chang Hong's expression. His voice was mixed with the clamminess of the rain and the pure smoothness of spring water as he slowly said, "If I go back now, I can only ride my horse back. If I come with you to Duke Zhen's residence, I can ride inside the carriage to go back home. Tell me, which option do you think I'll choose?"

Fine, so it was because of this carriage. Gao Qing Yang felt as if she had worried over nothing. She put down the curtain and peacefully sat back down. She didn't pay attention the person outside again.

The carriage quickly reached Duke Zhen's residence. This rain had come rapidly and had also left rapidly. In the time it would take to burn an incense stick, the rain had decreased significantly until there were only leftover raindrops.

Gao Qing Yang held her servant girl's hand for support as she came down from the carriage. She glanced towards Wei Chang Hong and said, "Thank you, Sir Wei."

Wei Chang Hong sat on the horse as he expressionlessly looked at her without saying a word.

So rude. Gao Qing Yang understood his natural disposition and didn't lower herself to argue with him. She took the umbrella that the servant girl handed to her and started to walk into Duke Zhen's residence.

But, just as she had taken one step, she heard a noisy clamor behind her. It was followed by someone yelling, "Miss, be careful!"

Gao Qing Yang turned her head to look and saw a black horse rushing towards her. The horse seemed to have suffered from a shock and couldn't be controlled. As it charged in her direction, it shook off the servants that tried to stop it. Gao Qing Yang was too startled and only instinctively fell backwards two steps, but it wasn't enough to avoid the horse. She could only watch as the horse lifted up its front legs and strike them down at her body –

"Miss!" A servant girl called out.

Gao Qing Yang also felt she was definitely going to die. Even if she didn't die, she would definitely be trampled and become a cripple. Her face was deathly pale and she even forgot to close her eyes. She saw a handsome and tall figure riding a horse forward.

He nimbly jumped onto the horse that had lost control and tightly grabbed the reins with both of his hands to turn the horse around. The horse's hooves heavily landed near Gao Qing Yang's side and splashed her with mud.

The previously rampaging horse now obediently stood still under Wei Chang Hong's control.

Sitting on the horse, Wei Chang Hong lowered his eyes and furrowed his eyebrows. He rather disdainfully asked, "Why didn't you avoid it?"

If there had been the slightest deviation just now, she might have lost her life.

Wei Chang Hong looked at Gao Qing Yang. Perhaps, it was because she had been extremely terrified by the recent event. She wasn't showing her usually calm and composed expression. Her face was deathly pale and her red lips were tightly pressed. Although the rain had stopped, there were still large and small puddles on the road. The mud from the horse's movement had splashed her body, including her face. Her small, exquisite face looked rather wretched, but her eyes were astonishingly bright.

Wei Chang Hong didn't know why, but he felt that Gao Qing Yang's ridiculous appearance looked slightly cute. It was much more pleasing to look at than her normal appearance.

Gao Qing Yang slowly stood up from the ground.

Her servant girl anxiously rushed over to look her over. In a sobbing tone, she asked, "Miss, are you okay? Are you hurt anywhere?" After Gao Dang Yang had married, Gao Qing Yang became Duke Zhen and his wife's most beloved daughter. If anything happened to her, she wouldn't be able to keep her life.

Gao Qing Yang shook her head. She looked at Wei Chang Hong for a moment before saying, "Thank you, Sir Wei." This time, her tone was sincere.

Wei Chang Hong jumped down from the horse. He lightly said, "No need." Then, he handed the reins to a servant that had just come over.

The servant was extremely grateful towards him and repeatedly thanked him.

Not long after, inside the residence, Duke Zhen and his wife heard what had happened outside and hastily rushed over here. They genuinely expressed their thanks to Wei Chang Hong, then they commanded that the servant, who had been responsible for watching over the horse, be punished by being beaten twenty times with a rod and lose three months of salary. Duke Zhen and his wife also warmly invited Wei Chang Hong to come into their home.

But, Wei Chang Hong only silently raised a hand in acknowledgement before mounting his horse and riding away.

Duke Zhen and his wife were still in an undecided and panicked state. Gao Qing Yang held them for support as she walked inside.

Duchess Zhen couldn't help praising Wei Chang Hong, "Sir Wei is truly an outstanding youth. Not only is he handsome, he's also very talented."

Gao Qing Yang silently followed them, but the recent image of Wei Chang Hong on the horse flashed through her mind. He had looked down on her from above as his wide sleeves were blown by the wind. His handsome eyebrows had been deeply furrowed as he very disapprovingly asked her, "Why didn't you avoid it?"

Gao Qing Yang had always thought he was an ignorant and incompetent person, a lounge lizard that used five minerals powder. But, in that moment, she felt that Wei Chang Hong's figure was tall and handsome. Gao Qing Yang took out a silk handkerchief to wipe the mud from her face. In her mind, she thought it would be the better if she found the time to go to Duke Ying's residence to say thank you again.

## Chapter 166.4

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The summer weather was muggy and hot. It felt unbearable. As Wei Luo lied on an elmwood couch that was underneath a trellis roof for growing flowering vines, she could hear the continuous chirping of insects from the trees. She sat up to hold a cup of ice-cold black plum soup. As she sipped the soup, she said to Bai Lan, “Fan harder. Did you not eat enough at lunch? Why are you fanning so weakly?”

Bai Lan’s brow was twisted as she said, “Your Highness, you’re about to give birth soon. It would better if you drink less cold liquids.”

There was a thin layer of sweat on the tip of Wei Luo’s nose. Even though she was hiding underneath the trellis roof, she wasn’t able to escape from the heat. She lied back down on the couch and lazily looked up. “Don’t worry. I asked Doctor Sun about this. He said it was okay. If even my small desire of drinking something cold is taken away from me, I don’t know how I can endure through this endless summer.”

As soon as Bai Lan heard Doctor Sun’s said it was okay, she immediately stopped worrying. Doctor Sun was much more knowledgeable than them.

Wei Luo lied on the couch to rest for a while. When Zhao Jie came home, her eyes were closed and she was peacefully sleeping.

Zhao Jie waved his hand to indicate for Bai Lan and Jin Luo to withdraw and sat down on the couch. He parted the loose hair on Wei Luo’s forehead and gently used his thumb to wipe away the sweat.

During today’s morning court, Emperor Chong Zhen brought up the topic of establishing the next emperor again. The court ministers that had previously objected to Zhao Jie had already vanished without a trace. Some of them had met with accidents



while they were traveling. Other court ministers had been thoroughly investigated by Emperor Chong Zhen for accepting bribes. There were also court ministers who took the initiative of proposing to retire from their official positions and returning to the countryside. Everyone had a tacit mutual understanding of who was behind all of this.

Other than Prince Rui, who had stepped forward, to retort, no one else in the imperial court dared to voice any objections. Regardless, the emperor had suppressed his objections and he could only step back to his original position.

The matter of choosing the crown prince was settled just like this. Once the Ministry of Rites selected an auspicious date and the Ministry of Justice finished drafting and finalizing the documents, Prince Jing Zhao Jie would be proclaimed as the crown prince. Emperor Chong Zhen announced that he would step down from the imperial court once this was done. In front of everyone, Emperor Chong told Zhao Jie to come with him to the imperial study. This was to clearly indicate that they would be discussing an important matter.

Prince Rui stood inside Han Yuan Hall with a gloomy and cold gaze. Soon after, he flung his sleeve and left the hall.

Zhao Zhang's expression wasn't good either. He clenched his fists inside his sleeve before following after Prince Rui's footsteps and left the hall together.

Emperor Chong Zhen mentioned Jiang Nan's flood to Zhao Jie about and asked about his opinions. After they finished discussing this matter, he didn't say anything else, just waved his hand to indicate for Zhao Jie to leave the room.

Before Zhao Jie left the study, Emperor Chong Zhen put down his brush and looked at the blue sky and white clouds through the window. He suddenly sighed, "Once you ascend the throne, this emperor will leave the capital with your imperial mother and

leisurely travel the country as husband and wife.”

Zhao Jie paused for a moment before he strode away without saying a word.

Zhao Jie’s movements woke Wei Luo up. When she opened her eyes, she saw that he was lost in thought. She couldn’t resist stretching her hand out and waving it in front of him. She asked, “What are you thinking about?”

Zhao Jie’s black eyes shifted. He grasped Wei Luo’s soft fingers, curved his lips into a smile, and said, “I was thinking about whether our child will be a son or daughter.”

Wei Luo very opinionatedly said, “It’s so mischievous. It’s definitely a son. Moreover, if a pregnant woman likes sour food, it means she’s going to have a son. If she likes spicy food, it means she’s going to have a daughter. Recently, I really like to eat sour plums.”

It wasn’t that Wei Luo had a preference for a son over a daughter. She was merely guessing based on what she knew. To be totally honest, Wei Luo still wanted to have a daughter slightly more. People all said that a daughter was like a small, cotton-padded jacket that would be intimate and considerate towards her mother. She also wanted a small cotton-padded jacket of her own.

Zhao Jie silently smiled. A while later, he finally said, “I thought of names for our child yesterday. Do you want to hear them?”

Wei Luo became interested, “Tell me.”

Zhao Jie said, “If it’s a son, then his name will be a single Chinese character, Xi. His name will have the warm and harmonious meaning of sunlight. If it’s a daughter, her name will be Ran Ran. It’s the ran from shi guang ren ran.” He looked at Wei Luo, pinched her small, round face, and asked, “What do you think?”

(T/N: Shi guang ren ran is an idiom that means passing of time, usually used to express an emotional feeling that time is fleeting).

Wei Luo pondered for a moment and felt that both of these names were pretty good. “Have you discussed this with His Majesty?”

Zhao Jie said, “Why would this prince have to discuss my own child’s name with him?”

All of the names of the imperial descendants had to be approved by the emperor first. However, this wasn’t the first or second time that Zhao Jie acted so arrogantly. In all likelihood, Emperor Chong Zhen didn’t have a way to deal with him either.

Wei Luo nodded, “Both of those names are pretty good. Then, it’s settled.”

After they finished discussing this, Zhao Jie stretched his arms out to hug Wei Luo. He hadn’t had time to be affectionate with her in many days. Right now, he just wanted to be close with her for a while.

Unexpectedly, she avoided him faster than a rabbit. With a look as if she was afraid that she wouldn’t be able to escape from him, she scowled as she said, “It’s too hot. Stay farther away from me. Don’t come closer.”

She suddenly thought of something and looked around, “Why did you drive Jin Lu and Bai Lan away? There’s no one left to fan me. No wonder I feel so hot...”

Zhao Jie knew that Wei Luo didn’t like being too hot, but he still felt slightly injured from how she had reacted and his expression didn’t look good.

Zhao Jie grasped Wei Luo’s slender, white wrist, leaned over, and easily pressed her underneath his body. He calmly looked down on her, “You want me to stay farther away?”

Wei Luo shrunk back slightly. Even though she was feeling hot, she didn’t dare to voice a complaint right now.

Zhao Jie lowered his head to bite her neck. He gently nibbled and

his voice became quieter and quieter, “Ah Luo, do you know how difficult it has been for me to resist during the past few months?”

In consideration for the baby in Wei Luo’s belly, Zhao Jie hadn’t touched her for over eight weeks and he was very much longing to do so. Zhao Jie’s hand went inside Wei Luo’s small top to hold her white steamed bun. He bit it a few times as if he was venting his anger, but at the same time, he didn’t dare to use too much force. However, Wei Luo’s body was delicate and red marks quickly appeared on her skin. Wei Luo yelped in pain, so he changed to coaxingly sucking on it.

Wei Luo twisted her body. She couldn’t stop worry. “Stop, our child will be coming out soon. Doctor Sun said that we can’t do this during the last three months...”

Zhao Jie naturally remembered his words. He knew that he couldn’t truly touch her. He just wanted to feed his craving a little bit.

A moment later, quiet moaning could be heard from the trellis roof frame.

There were curtains hanging from the trellis roof frame, so the scene inside couldn’t be clearly seen, only the shadowy figures of two people could be seen. Zhao Jie had completely wrapped himself around Wei Luo with his head buried in her chest. After Wei Luo stretched a hand out to push him, she quietly yelped. Perhaps, she was feeling pain from being bitten again.

A long time later, Zhao Jie asked in dissatisfaction, “Why isn’t there milk?”

Wei Luo felt flustered and exasperated. If she wasn’t worried about harming her child, she really wanted to kick him to the ground. “It’ll only come after the child is born. I haven’t given birth yet, why would there be...” When she had said half of her sentence, her face had already become unspeakably red. She couldn’t finish her words.

Zhao Jie lingered in this position for a bit before turning over and wrapping his arm behind Wei Luo. He heavily breathed into Wei Luo's ear and slowly said to Wei Luo, "Wait until this child is born and you'll see how I'll punish you."

Wei Luo's long eyelashes trembled. She didn't say a word.

## Chapter 166.5

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As the time for the birthing approached, Wei Luo's mood became increasingly tense and nervous.

Zhao Jie had found the capital's four most dependable and well-known midwives for her. He had them stayed in Prince Jing's residence for the time being. As soon as there was the slightest change in Wei Luo's situation, it would be convenient to summon them to Wei Luo's side.

Even so, Wei Luo still felt uneasy and anxious all day long. She hadn't even started to give birth yet, but she had already made herself miserably worried.

Today, Wei Luo came to the study to bring Zhao Jie tea and snacks. Her wrist accidentally knocked into the curved part of the red sandalwood table and her jade bracelet cracked into two pieces before falling to the ground. Wei Luo stared at the broken bracelet on the ground for a long time without moving.

Zhao Jie pulled her to his side, ordered Zhu Geng to throw out the broken bracelet, and looked at her as he said, "Look at you, you seem so scared. Why are you so ill-at-ease?" He pinched Wei Luo's earlobe. He was comforting her as well as comforting himself, "Didn't we already talk about this? This prince is here and won't let anything happen to you."

Wei Luo looked at Zhao Jie and nodded. She climbed onto Zhao Jie's lap, wrapped her arms around his neck, and said, "I'm scared... I don't know why. Maybe, it's because this is my first time giving birth and I don't have any experience, so my heart keeps feeling uneasy. No matter what I do, my thoughts keep wandering."

Zhao Jie smiled as he scratched her nose, "There's nothing to be afraid of. You're only scaring yourself."

Wei Luo touched her nose and thought, perhaps.

However, she hadn't sat on Zhao Jie's lap for long before Yang Hao hurriedly rushed into the study. He didn't even take a moment to follow etiquette before saying, "Your Highness, bad news. Bao He Hall caught on fire! Her Majesty was inside the hall chanting sutras!"

Zhao Jie's expression changed. Fear also gripped Wei Luo's heart.

Zhao Jie immediately stood up and coldly asked, "What happened? Where is imperial mother now?"

Yang Hao said, "This subordinate doesn't know the exact details and only knows that Her Majesty hasn't been rescued yet and is still trapped inside Bao He Hall."

Zhao Jie's expression was very ugly. He strode towards the door, "Prepared a horse!"

Wei Luo hurriedly followed after him. She grabbed Zhao Jie's sleeve and said, "I want to go too."

No matter how much you tried to avoid fate, the will of the heavens couldn't be changed. Wei Luo had thought that since Zhao Jie had assigned people to watch over Bao He Hall's surrounding area, Empress Chen's death by fire would be avoided in this lifetime. Against her expectations, this event still happened. Wei Luo had felt there was something was wrong after hearing Empress Chen's words at Qing Xi Palace's entrance. Empress Chen's voice sounded as if she no longer cared about anything. This was why she had asked Zhao Jie again to confirm and stopped worrying once he said everything had been arranged. But now... Why did this still happen?

Zhao Jie stroked her face, "Ah Luo, it's not suitable for you to go there in your current condition. Stay here and wait for me to bring back news. Be good, I don't want anything bad to happen to you too."

Wei Luo insistently said, "I know that I can't help with anything. But, imperial mother is in danger. I can't just sit here and do nothing. Big brother, please bring me with you."

Zhao Jie lowered his eyes and stared at her. A moment later, he ordered Yang Hao, "Prepare a carriage!"

The carriage hurriedly drove towards the palace. Before Wei Luo and Zhao Jie reached Bao He Hall, they already saw a raging fire in front of them. The intensity of the fire was like a torrential wave. Almost half of the sky was red because of the fire.

Zhao Jie's expression was so ugly that it was terrifying. His thin lips were tightly pressed into a line. By the time they finally reached Bao He Hall, the area had already become a sea of fire. The fire had already engulfed the hall's main doors. The blazing fire was raging. It made people feel intimidated and fearful. They didn't dare to rashly go forward.

The guards and palace servants carried bucket after bucket of water to put out the fire. They hurriedly passed by Wei Luo and Zhao Jie. At this time, no one paid attention to etiquette. It was more important to put out the fire first.

Wei Luo looked up and saw the emperor standing diagonally from them. He was wearing his golden court robes with a pattern of dragons inside circles. Emperor Chong Zhen stared at Bao He Hall without moving. His eyes had turned red and his arms were faintly trembling at his side.

He probably hadn't expected today's scene either.

Emperor Chong Zhen thought that if he slowly and patiently made up for what he had done in the past, Empress Chen would definitely forgive him one day. He had even imagined that he would bring his Wan Wan to various places once Zhao Jie ascended the throne. They would go see Mount Emei and Sun Moon Lake. They would travel the world together as a couple and be as leisurely as wild cranes and floating clouds. They would be an



ordinary husband and wife that had a love that was worthy of praise.

(T/N: Mount Emei is one the four sacred Buddhist Mountain in China. Sun Moon Lake is the largest lake in Taiwan and one of the top eight scenic spots in Taiwan.)

He would have never anticipated that Empress Chen would be so cold-hearted towards him. She wouldn't even give him a chance to redeem himself. She wanted to leave this world before him.

No!

He couldn't let her to leave like this!

They had taken so many detours and wrong paths until they had gradually drifted further and further away from each other. They had finally started to come back together on the same path. He had so many things that he wanted to say to her. How could she die? Emperor Chong seemed as if he had suddenly achieved enlightenment. He seized a bucket of water from a nearby guard, brought it over his head, and poured it over himself. He headed towards Bao He Hall without any hesitation.

Everyone was stunned stupid by his action. When Eunuch Chu returned to his senses, he hugged the emperor's leg in fear and panic. "Your Majesty, what are you going to do? Don't act rashly. People have already gone inside to find and save the empress. Perhaps, she'll be rescued in just a few more moments and be brought out. You definitely can't go inside!"

The people behind the emperor all kneeled down and shouted, "Your Majesty, please reconsider."

Emperor Chong kicked Eunuch Chu away from him. He gritted his teeth and said, "Wan Wan is still inside. How can this emperor continue to wait her? Stop your nonsense. This emperor is a supreme being and won't die easily."

After he said this, he paused and looked at Zhao Jie, who wasn't

standing far away, with a complicated expression. “If something happens to this emperor, arrange for throne to be passed onto Prince Jing on behalf of this emperor.”

The group of people sorrowfully shouted, “Your Majesty!”

Zhao Jie’s eyes sunk and he clenched the fist that was hidden in his sleeve tighter and tighter.

Emperor Chong Zhen didn’t pay further attention to them. He turned around and resolutely walked into the sea of fire

The intensity of the fire was as powerful as torrential wave. Several of the hall’s pillars had fallen and there was dark smoke billowing in front of him. He couldn’t clearly see the path in front of him. Other than the palace guards, Zhao Jie had also sent several people inside the hall to rescue Empress Chen. However, no one had been able to find her. Some of those people had even been engulfed by the fire and became departed spirits.

Zhao Zhi Qing shouted, “Wan Wan, where are you?!”

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Everyone was waiting outside of Bao He Hall.

Wei Luo tightly clutched Zhao Jie’s sleeve. Her heart felt as if had jumped up to her throat and eyes. Her belly had originally only felt slightly painful and she thought it was only because she was too nervous. However, the painful feeling gradually became more and more intense until she couldn’t ignore it anymore.

Wei Luo’s small face was pale as she helplessly called out Zhao Jie’s name.

Zhao Jie saw that her face didn’t look good. He hastily picked her up and asked, “Ah Luo, what’s wrong?”

Wei Luo clung to Zhao Jie’s robe and slowly said, “I... I think I’m about to give birth...”

# Chapter 167.1

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Black smoke surged out from Bao He Hall to the sky above. A group of people was kneeling outside of the hall with Eunuch Chu at the head of the group. They repeatedly shouted, “Your Majesty!”

A short while later, Eunuch Chu finally returned to his senses. He looked towards the stunned palace servants and guards and said, “Why are all of you doing nothing? Hurry and put out the fire! If anything happens to His Majesty and Her Majesty, none of your lives can bear the responsibility.”

The guards and palace servants hurriedly returned to putting out the fire and carried wooden buckets back and forth.

Eunuch Chu continued to kneel in front of Bao He Hall with his palms put together in prayer as he mumbled his prayer to a bodhisattva, “Compassionate Bodhisattva, Guanyin, please protect His Majesty and Her Majesty. This servant is willing to give up ten years of my life...”

On the other side, Zhao Jie hurriedly carried Wei Luo the nearest residence hall, which was Zhao Yang Hall. Zhao Jie’s hands were sweaty and the muscles on his forehead were violently twitching. As soon as he arrived at Zhao Yang Hall, he sternly said, “Summon the imperial doctor!”

The palace servants in Zhao Yang Hall didn’t know what was happening, but seeing how nervous Prince Jing was, they left the hall in a flurry without asking questions.

Qiu Mama was the only one with a clear head. Seeing that Wei Luo’s expression looked wrong, she guessed that Wei Luo was going to be giving birth soon. This being the case, what was the use in summoning an imperial doctor? Prince Jing was probably so worried that he had lost the ability to think logically. Qiu Mama hurriedly went outside, stopped the palace servants that were leaving to get an imperial doctor, and told them to bring back a

midwife instead.

The palace servants looked towards the hall, and one of them hesitantly said, “But His Highness said...”

Qiu Mama said, “His Highness is just confused because he’s too worried. Why are you following along with his foolishness? Just do as I say. Hurry!”

The palace servants finally understood. They anxiously and hastily went to the place where the midwives stayed.

There wasn’t enough time for the midwives in Prince Jing’s residence to enter the palace. Fortunately, the palace had its own midwives for when the imperial consorts gave birth. These dependable midwives worked in the palace and had experience with assisting in the birth of imperial descendants. There definitely wouldn’t be a problem with them helping Wei Luo deliver her baby.

Wei Luo was lying on Empress Chen’s red sandalwood babu bed. Because she was too nervous, her fingers were tightly clutching Zhao Jie’s dark green sleeve embroidered with hornless dragons. Although it wasn’t hurting as much as before, her eyes were red and she couldn’t help feeling terrified. If Zhao Jie stayed here to keep her company, perhaps, she would feel a bit better.

However, Qiu Mama said to Zhao Jie, “Your Highness, the birthing room isn’t auspicious. Please leave the room and wait outside for the princess consort’s news.”

Wei Luo pursed her lips. Her fingertips trembled and she held Zhao Jie’s sleeve a little bit tighter. She didn’t want Zhao Jie to leave.

Zhao Jie became aware of Wei Luo’s trepidation. He held her hand and didn’t allow Qiu Mama to have a say in the matter, “It’s fine. This prince will wait here.”

“This...” Qiu Mama helplessly furrowed her eyebrows. She

wanted to continue persuading, but then she saw Zhao Jie's quiet and solemn appearance. He was utterly serious, so she closed her mouth in embarrassment.

Not long after, two midwives that were wearing dark reddish purple clothing came into the room. They were startled when they saw Zhao Jie sitting by the bedside. They haltingly saluted, "Your Highness..."

Zhao Jie wasn't in the mood to deal with others. He waved his hand and told them to rise. "Come here and help the princess consort with delivering the baby."

The two midwives had never encountered a situation like this. It was a huge taboo and very inauspicious for a man to see a woman give birth. Any man with status would generally avoid doing something like this. Against expectations, Prince Jing, who had such a highly noble status, didn't care about avoiding this and only cared about Princess Consort Jing's condition. The midwives didn't dare to ask any other questions. Fortunately, Zhao Jie was sitting by the side and wouldn't be interfering with the birthing process. They hurriedly put away their stray thoughts and walked to the bed to check Wei Luo's situation.

At this moment, Wei Luo was extremely nervous. Her child wasn't even coming out yet, but she had already driven herself to an unbearable fearful state. She stared at Zhao Jie with her limpid eyes and worriedly said, "Don't go."

Zhao Jie stroked her face, tucked her loose hair to the side, and said, "I won't go. I'll stay here with you."

Wei Luo finally stopped worrying.

The two midwives were awfully frightened. They had heard that Prince Jing was extremely ruthless. Why did he seem different from the rumors? Why was he using such a gentle tone to speak? It seemed that Prince Jing's heart was definitely set on Princess Consort Jing. They definitely had to muster up 120% of their

energy. If anything happened to Princess Consort Jing, they would definitely die.

As the two midwives carefully moved Wei Luo's body to the proper position, they internally hoped that Wei Luo would be able to smoothly give birth.

## Chapter 167.2

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Outside Bao He Hall.

Clearly, only fifteen minutes had passed. But, Eunuch Chu felt as if half a lifetime had passed. Emperor Chong Zhen and Empress Chen still hadn't come out from the hall. The fire was only getting worse the more it burned. It had even spread to the surrounding halls. Fortunately, the other halls weren't important. It would be fine to just repair them later. But if something happen to the emperor and empress, then it wouldn't just be a matter of repairing...

Eunuch Chu was crying profusely. He kowtowed several times towards Bao He Hall, "Your Majesties, please hurry and come out..."

Perhaps, the bodhisattva heard Eunuch Chu's prayer. He saw a pitiful looking emperor walking out of the blazing fire while carrying an unconscious empress. Just as Zhao Zhi Qing walked out of Bao He Hall, one of pillars behind him suddenly collapsed and loudly fell onto the ground. It almost crushed the emperor and empress.

Eunuch Chu cried with joy, "His Majesty! Her Majesty!" As he said this, he hurriedly walked forward to check their conditions.

There was an obvious burn on Zhao Zhi Qing's shoulder, along with big and small burns on his hands and legs. His clothes were also disheveled and shabby. At this moment, the emperor, who usually paid special attention to his appearance, was completely unconcerned about his image. Using the last of bit of his strength, he placed Empress Chen onto the ground. Before he fainted, he hoarsely said, "Save Wan Wan."

His Wan Wan, she couldn't die.

Despite being shocked, Eunuch Chu hurriedly ordered people to

bring the emperor and empress to Yang Xin Hall and summoned all of the imperial doctors to examine the emperor and empress. From the start of the discovering the fire and until everything had been settled down, four hours had passed.

The burn on Emperor Chong Zhen's shoulder was the most serious injury. The clothing had stuck been stuck to his skin and it was very difficult to remove. In the end, a small knife had to be used to scrape off the burnt flesh before the bleeding could be treated. However, as soon as Emperor Chong Zhen woke up, he didn't care about his own body. He grabbed an imperial doctor and asked, "How's Wan Wan?"

The imperial doctor's hand trembled and he fearfully said, "To respond to Your Majesty, the empress has inhaled too much smoke and is still unconscious. This official has examined the empress. She doesn't have any serious injuries and will probably wake up soon."

Emperor Chong released the imperial doctor and leaned against a large red pillow embroidered with a flower pattern. His expression showed that he was clearly more relaxed.

The imperial doctor applied medicine to the rest of injuries on Emperor Chong's body and warned him to not touch water for the next several days before withdrawing from the room.

Emperor Chong blankly sat for a while before asking the quietly waiting Eunuch Chu, "Where's the empress?"

After Eunuch Chu knew that the emperor and empress would be okay, he had thanked the bodhisattva countless times and had already calmed down. He said, "To respond to Your Majesty, the empress is sleeping in Yang Xin Hall's side chamber. This servant has already arranged for servants to wait on her."

Emperor Chong Zhen thought for a moment before he pushed the quilt aside and got up from the bed. He said, "This emperor will go there to look." He still felt worried.



“Your Majesty, the imperial physician said you should stay in bed to rest...” Eunuch Chu felt sympathetic towards the emperor and couldn’t help feeling distressed.

But, Emperor Chong Zhen didn’t listen to his words. After he put on a black robe, he stubbornly hobbled towards the side chamber.

Eunuch Chu looked at the emperor’s back figure before following after him. He had originally thought the emperor and empress was a normal couple that treated each with mutual respect. But after today, Eunuch Chu’s view had completely changed.

How could he have thought that the emperor didn’t care about the empress? He clearly cared about the empress to the core of his bones. For the empress, he had even been willing to sacrifice his life. How many emperors in the world would be able to do this?

Don’t even mention a man born in the imperial family, even a man from an ordinary family wouldn’t love this deeply.

With these thoughts in his mind, Emperor Chong Zhen became an even greater figure in Eunuch Chu’s mind.

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In the side chamber, Emperor Chong Zhen reached the bedside and looked at Empress Chen, who hadn’t woken up yet. Empress Chen’s clothes had been changed. She was motionlessly lying on the bed with her eyes tightly closed and her hair loosely scattered on the red bedding. If he couldn’t see the slight movement of her breathing, he would have thought that her vitality had been sapped away.

Emperor Chong Zhen tightly clutched Empress Chen’s hand and lowered his forehead to touch the hand he was holding. It felt as if his throat had been blocked by gravel. He wasn’t able to say a single word.

He recollected the scene he had seen in the fire. Empress Chen had been quietly sitting on the praying mat with her eyes closed as

if the surrounding fire had nothing to do with her. She had looked aloof as if she wasn't concerned about her mortal life and this mundane world. By the time he found her, she had already been unconscious for a long time.

Emperor Chong Zhen's entire body trembled. Overflowing painful and remorseful sobs came out from his throat. He had never known she would have this type of idea. She had probably premeditated this fire and decided to leave a long time ago. He was the one that had forcibly taken her back from the underworld.

Wan Wan, was he that unworthy of forgiveness? Why was she so resolute? Why couldn't she spare any of her thoughts for him?

Emperor Chong Zhen raised his head and looked at Empress Chen, who still hadn't woken up. He couldn't restrain his emotions and stretched out a hand to touch her face. He stared at her for a long time before slowly lowering his head and burying his face in Empress Chen's hand.

"Sorry..." His voice was hoarse. He had probably also inhaled a lot of the smoke. "Wan Wan, this emperor is sorry."

Empress Chen's eyelashes fluttered, but she still remained unconscious.

Emperor Chong Zhen sat by her bedside and said a few more words. He had serious injuries and it wouldn't be good for him to stay here for too long. A short while later, Eunuch Chu persuaded him to return to his own bed. Before the emperor left the side chamber, he severely ordered the palace servants to properly take care of the empress.

Shortly after Emperor Chong Zhen left, the empress slowly opened her eyes.

## Chapter 167.3

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She had already woken up when Zhao Zhi Qing sat down by her bed, but she kept her eyes closed because she didn't know how to face him. While she had been unconscious, she had been somewhat aware of her surroundings and faintly remembered what had happened during that period. She knew who had risked his life to rescue her from Bao He Hall.

It was outside of Empress Chen's expectation that Emperor Chong Zhen would personally rescue her. She had originally thought he was the type of person that only cared about his throne and power. Everything else was dispensable to him. Unexpectedly, she had a leading position in his heart. It was exactly because of this reason that Empress Chen didn't know what type of expression to face Emperor Chong Zhen with.

She hadn't expected that he would apologize to her.

Zhao Zhi Qing had been haughty and conceited since he was young. After he became emperor, it would be easier to reach the heavens than get an apology from him. She didn't expect that she would hear his apology while she was pretending to be asleep.

With her eyes opened, Empress Chen's gaze fell on the canopy curtain above her head that was embroidered with butterflies and golden bees. She looked at it for a long before slightly returning to her senses.

Empress Chen called a palace servant to her side, "What's the current situation in the palace?"

Such a large disturbance had occurred in the palace. Everyone in palace should know about today's events.

The palace servant said, "To respond to Your Majesty, the fire in Bao He Hall has been extinguished, but the damage done by the fire was very serious. The golden statue in the hall was also burned

down...”

After the palace servant said this, she added, “Princess Consort Jing’s felt contractions on the way here. She’s currently in labor in Zhao Yang Hall. Prince Jing is with her.”

Startled, Empress Chen blurted out, “Ah Luo’s giving birth?”

Immediately after, she asked, “Has the baby been born?”

The palace servant shook her head and said, “Not yet.”

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Zhao Yang Hall.

Four hours later.

Inside the delivery room, there were gushes of heat.

One midwife was keeping watching at the head of the bed and the other was at the end of the bed doing the same as they said words of persuasion and encouragement to Wei Luo. The hair in front of Wei Luo’s forehead had been soaked with sweat and her small face was deathly pale. By now, she was completely exhausted and didn’t even have the energy to speak. There was only the faint sound of her breathing. She resembled a weary porcelain doll and didn’t even have the strength to raise her eyelashes. Her lowered long eyelashes covered the light in her black eyes.

Wei Luo felt that she didn’t have much longer to live. It was too painful. She almost didn’t want to continue giving birth. But, she was also unwilling to give up. Besides, it had already reached this point. It wasn’t like she could forcefully return to before. Her limpid, black eyes turned and turned until her gaze met the midwife’s. Her voice had already become hoarse from yelling, “Where’s Zhao...?” She was in so much pain that she couldn’t even say his full name.

The midwife looked at the ashen Prince Jing, who was standing near the bed. Zhao Jie had previously been sitting at the head of

the bed and had been disturbing the birthing process. The midwife had rallied her courage to ask him to stand at the side. Ever since Wei Luo hadn't been able to push the baby out, his face has looked this way. It made the people in the birthing room feel even more frightened.

She fed Wei Luo a piece of ginseng and gave an irrelevant answer, "Your Highness, slowly chew this piece of ginseng. You can't give up. The baby is still in your belly..."

Wei Luo felt so much pain that tears fell from her eyes and hanged on her eyelashes. She looked both pitiful and made people feel distressed. She said, "Tell him to come over here."

Just as the midwife was about to call him over, Zhao Jie had already stridden to the head of the bed and tightly held Wei Luo's hand. Zhao Jie brushed the sweaty hair on Wei Luo's forehead to the side. His previously fierce expression had already turned gentle. "Ah Luo, hold on for a little bit longer. The baby will come out soon."

Wei Luo sobbed, "It hurts so much. I don't want to give birth anymore."

Zhao Jie stroked her small face and in an extremely helpless voice, he said, "How can you stop halfway? Be good, push harder. I'll be right here with you. I won't go anywhere else."

Wei Luo wanted to say something else, but a sharp pain came from her belly and her words turned into a scream. She grabbed Zhao Jie's hand, placed his wrist in her mouth, and bit down.

Seeing this sight, the midwife hurriedly rushed over and encouraged Wei Luo to use more energy. The baby would be born soon.

Wei Luo bit down on Zhao Jie's wrist in pain. It seemed as if she had made a decision when she deeply inhaled, put all of her strength into her lower body, and desperately tried to push the

baby out. She tasted blood in her mouth, but Zhao Jie didn't even blink, much less cry out in pain like her. Wei Luo felt as if her mind had left her body and she could only feel her body slackening.

The midwife exclaimed out in surprise, "It's born! It's born!"

Wei Luo slowly closed her eyes in fatigue. Her baby had finally been born. She thought if it continued to stay in her belly, she would have died from the pain.

Zhao Jie took out a handkerchief to wipe Wei Luo's sweat. His eyes never looked away from her.

The midwife gently slapped the baby's butt and the baby's responded with a resounding cry. The midwife brought the baby to the side to clean it, wrapped it swaddling clothes, and brought it to Wei Luo and Zhao Jie, "Your Highnesses."

Zhao Jie finally raised his head and asked, "Is it a son or daughter?"

The midwife said with a smile, "Congratulations Your Highnesses, it's a baby boy."

So, it was a son. No wonder he was so troublesome. Wei Luo had the midwife bring the baby closer. She tilted her head to glance at the baby. She asked in surprise, "Why is he so ugly?"

At first, the midwife froze in surprise. Soon after, she laughed and said, "All newborn babies look like this. The wrinkles on his face will smooth out later." This was the first time she had seen a mother be disdainful of her own child and think it was ugly.

Zhao Jie took the swaddled bundle from the midwife and had both of the midwives leave the room. It was comical to see a grown man holding a baby. So, his hand that had become accustomed to hold swords could also gently hold a baby. Zhao Jie lowered his head to look at the little fellow, then he looked at Wei Luo. He held her hand and said, "He looks like you."

Wei Luo frowned. In her mind, she thought that she didn't look

this ugly.

His wrinkled, red face looked remarkably liked a hairless monkey's.

But, Wei Luo couldn't say any of these words. She had already fainted from fatigue.

# Chapter 168.1

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Wei Luo slept for a day and a night.

When she woke up the next day, her body had already been cleaned and she had been changed into a cleaning sleeping robe. The first glimmer of dawn was peaking through the window and there was a smear of light turquoise at the horizon. She could faintly hear the sound of a palace servant moving around. Wei Luo turned her eyes to see a palace servant wearing a pink jacket and skirt closing the window.

When the servant turned her head and saw that Wei Luo had woken up, she hurriedly saluted and said, “Your Highness, are you wake?”

Wei Luo didn’t recognize her. She was probably one of Zhao Yang Hall’s servant girls. She asked, “What time is it?”

The palace servant responded, “7 AM.”

After the window was closed, the hall was very quiet. The palace servant saw that Wei Luo was looking around the room and knew that she was looking for someone, so she explained, “Prince Jing watched over you the entire night. He recently heard that Her Majesty has woken up, so he went to see her. He’ll probably be back soon. The little heir is sleeping in the side chamber and he’s being watched over by a wet nurse. If the princess consort wants to see the little heir, this servant can bring him over.”

Wei Luo nodded, “Bring him over for me to see.” Since the baby had been born, she only had time to glance at him. She hadn’t properly seen what little watermelon looked like yet. Although he was a bit ugly, he was still her son. She wouldn’t dislike of him.

The palace servant stepped forward, helped Wei Luo sit up, placed a large red pillow embroidered with gold and silver thread behind Wei Luo’s back, and added, “Your Highness, are you



hungry? You should eat something first.”

Wei Luo shook her head, “Bring over my baby first.”

It wouldn’t be good for the palace servant to go against Wei Luo’s words. She went to the side chamber to bring the baby over.

Little watermelon was wrapped in red swaddling clothes that were embroidered with lotus flowers. He had just finished drinking milk and hadn’t fallen back asleep yet, so his eyes were wide open. When the palace servant put him in Wei Luo’s arms, Wei Luo quietly sounded her surprise. It had only been a day and he already seemed not as ugly as yesterday. Wei Luo used her fingers to touch his face. It felt soft and plump. He was only a small ball, but he had tormented her quite a bit yesterday.

Little watermelon met her gaze and opened his mouth to babble.

No wonder Zhao Jie had said their baby looked like her. His black and bright eyes seemed as if they had been made from the same mold as hers and looked like pools of deep water that was so clear you could see the bottom of them. Wei Luo touched his eyebrows and also touched his nose and mouth. The more she looked, the more she cherished him. So, this was the little fellow that had stayed in her belly for ten moons. Wei Luo said, “Little watermelon, I’m your mother. Do you remember?”

Little watermelon blinked and looked at her in confusion for a moment before he opened his small mouth and wrinkled his nose to let out a wide yawn.

Wei Luo found his action funny. She copied what she had seen Liang Yu Rong do by lightly patting his back to coax him into sleeping. It only took a few moments before the little fellow fell asleep. He was obediently curled up in Wei Luo’s arms with his eyes closed and not fussing at all.

The palace servant took an extra few glimpses out of curiosity. When the wet nurse had taken the little heir away last night, he

had looked very pitiful as he cried and fussed. Why did he stop crying as soon as the princess consort was holding him? Could it be that a mother and child really did have a mutual sensitivity and connection with each other?

After the palace servant looked at them for a while, she tried to persuade Wei Luo, “Your Highness, you just woke up. You shouldn’t exert yourself too much. This servant can return the little heir to the side chamber. Do you want to eat something?”

Wei Luo tucked in the baby’s swaddling clothes. She felt reluctant to send him away, so she said, “I want to hold him for a little longer.”

The palace servant couldn’t successfully persuade her. Put into a difficult position, she could only leave the room to ask someone to inform Prince Jing. However, just as she stepped past the doorway, she saw Prince Jing in front of her. He was wearing a sky blue robe with a circular embroidery design in dark thread.

“This servant greets Your Highness, Prince Jing.”

Zhao Jie lifted his feet up as he crossed the doorway. He didn’t acknowledge the palace servant and directly went towards the inner room in the hall.

Wei Luo was currently holding the baby and sitting against the head of the bed. Her head was lowered as she carefully looked over little watermelon. She stretched her hand out to touch his eyelashes. As she fondled him admiringly, she resembled a young girl that had gotten a new toy.

As soon as Zhao Jie saw this, he stopped walking, stayed behind the eight-panel red sandalwood divider that was painted with joyful magpies, and quietly looked at them. However, after some time had passed, Wei Luo still didn’t notice him. She kept quietly teasing the child in her arms. Her lips were curved into a soft and sweet smile. She had never shown such a gentle and satisfied expression in front of Zhao Jie.

Zhao Jie started to feel slightly jealous. He placed his hand by his mouth and quietly coughed.

Wei Luo raised her head and finally noticed that he was here.

Right after Zhao Jie had taken a step forward, she placed her forefinger on her lips and shushed him. “Be quieter, little watermelon just fell asleep.”

Zhao Jie, “...”

She had only recently gotten this son and she had already forgotten to care about her husband.

Zhao Jie sat down on the bed, looked at his son that was peacefully sleeping, and asked, “I heard from the palace servant that you haven’t eaten yet after you work up. Why not? I’ll have the cooks prepare some dishes. You should at least eat some of the food once it’s ready.”

Wei Luo’s was finally willing to look away from little watermelon. Her gaze landed on Zhao Jie.

“I’m not that hungry... I heard that you went to see imperial mother. How is she? Is she okay?”

Zhao Jie nodded, took the baby from Wei Luo’s arms, and handed him over to the nearby palace servant. “Bring him back to the side chamber.”

When he looked back at Wei Luo, he saw that she looked very reluctant to part with their son, but she didn’t say anything. He said, “Imperial mother wasn’t injured. Her body is just somewhat weak. The imperial physician said she’d be fine after resting a few days. As for you, stay at Zhao Yang Hall and properly recuperate here. We’ll go back home once your body is recovered.”

Wei Luo had just given birth, so it would be unsuitable for her to travel. Empress Chen was willing to let her stay at Zhao Yang Hall for the traditional one-month confinement period following childbirth. This showed that Empress Chen treasured her dearly.

Wei Luo asked, “Then, where will imperial mother be staying?”  
She couldn’t cause the empress to have nowhere to go.

## Chapter 168.2

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Zhao Jie paused before saying, “Yang Xin Hall.”

Yang Xin Hall was the emperor’s bedroom. It wouldn’t be inappropriate for Empress Chen to stay there. There probably wasn’t anything that Emperor Chong Zhen wished more for than this opportunity.

Wei Luo was silent for a bit before she quietly said, “Oh.” She thought of what she had seen before she had started giving birth. Emperor Chong had rushed into the fire without regard for his life. Wei Luo had to admit that she had been very shocked. Emperor Chong Zhen valued Empress Chen more than his own life. Exactly, how much did he love her? Since he loved her so much, why did he abandon Empress Chen to favor only Noble Consort Ning? Would Empress Chen forgive him? Wei Luo couldn’t figure out the answers to these questions, so she stopped letting her imagination run wild.

She said, “Why did Bao He Hall catch on fire? Did they figure out what happened?”

Zhao Jie said, “Imperial mother had dismissed all of the palace servants and guards at the entrance. Although she hadn’t discovered the hidden guards, the fire had spread too quickly. By the time they noticed, it was already too late.”

The implication was the Empress Chen had single-mindedly sought death. She had planned and prepared everything by herself. It wasn’t related to anyone else.

Even though he knew this, Emperor Chong Zhen was still determined to investigate the palace servants and guards that had been stationed at Bao He Hall to vent his anger.

Wei Luo leaned against her pillow and didn’t say anything.

Fortunately, this lifetime was different. Empress Chen had been

rescued and hadn't been burnt to ashes in the sea of fire, so that even her bones weren't left behind for the emperor.

A short while later, a palace servant walked into the room while carrying a vermillion tray that was painted with a sunflower pattern. She placed the tray down on a square table that was inlaid with gold and decorated with spirals that was near the head of the bed. She briefly saluted before withdrawing from the room.

Zhao Jie picked up the bowl of pigeon and reishi mushroom soup, scooped a spoonful of soup, blew on it to cool it down, and brought the spoon to Wei Luo's lips, "Here, take a sip."

Pigeon meat could help wounds heal and recover injuries completely. When it was cooked in soup, it was even more effective. Wei Luo also wanted to quickly recover, so she obediently drank the soup. After she finished drinking the soup, she ate some of the small, side dishes. Zhao Jie had handed all of this food to her. Relying on the fact that she had recently given outstanding service, Wei Luo didn't feel the slightest bit embarrassed. After eating, she comfortably lied back down on the bed. She didn't dare to move around too much. Her lower body hurt too much when she did.

A while later, her eyes turned and she looked as if she wanted to say something. Her fingers dug into Zhao Jie's palm and scratched it.

Zhao Jie's thin lips lightly smiled and he asked, "What's wrong?"

Wei Luo whispered, "I want..."

All humans need to go the bathroom and she had lied on this bed for a day and night without leaving. Zhao Jie clearly knew what she was referring to, but he deliberately pretended to not know. He quietly said, "Oh, what do you want?"

Wei Luo's face turned red and she glared at him. She didn't say

another word and only directly looked at him.

When Zhao Jie had finally teased her enough, he chuckled, lifted her up from the bed, and carried her to the bathroom at the back of the hall.

Zhao Jie placed her on the wooden container and asked her, “Do you need to me take off your pants?”

Wei Luo bit her lip and said, “No need.” Then, she pushed him towards the outside.

Zhao Jie didn’t resist and walked to behind the divider to wait.

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During the first three days, Wei Luo couldn’t leave the bed by herself. She had her meals while sitting in the bed and everything was done by Zhao Jie. He even helped her with changing her clothes and going to the bathroom. At the beginning, she was thin-skinned and would blush with embarrassment every time Zhao Jie teased her.

But now, she had lost her sensitivity. When Zhao Jie said teasing remarks, she would either glare at him with her limpid and glossy eyes or pinch the soft part of his flesh and say, “You’re not allowed to mention this.”

Empress Chen had recently visited her a few times to tell her she could peacefully stay here for her one month confinement period after childbirth. During those visits, Empress Chen seemed liked she wasn’t in a good mood. So, Wei Luo would have a palace servant bring Zhao Xi over after they exchanged a few words. A faint smile appeared on Empress Chen’s face whenever she saw Zhao Xi.

After many days of feeding, little Zhao Xi has already lost his ugliness. Not only was he no longer ugly, the little fellow now had a beautifully, exquisite appearance. With his rosy cheeks and white skin, he resembled a crystal-like white jade dumpling and was very

lovable. Zhao Xi liked to laugh and wasn't afraid of strangers at all. Whenever anyone played with him, his giggles could be heard from a far distance. All of the palace servants, whether it was servant girls or mamas, liked him.

Empress Chen treated him like a piece of her heart. He was her favorite person. It made sense. She had been looking forward to having a grandson for many years. How could she not cherish him?

Logically, Zhao Jie should be very happy to have such a lovable child. However, his mood hadn't been good lately. It was probably because all of Wei Luo's attention had been focused on little watermelon. She didn't have any time to care about Zhao Jie. There were times when Zhao Jie had stood in front of her for a long without her noticing his presence. She was too focused on playing with little watermelon.

As each day passed, Zhao Jie's expression became worse and worse.

On the day when little watermelon was one month old, Emperor Chong had arranged for his one-month-old birthday celebration to be held in the palace and invited the imperial court's civil and military officers to the celebration. The occasion was quite grand.

Little Zhao Xi was too young to understand what was happening. He only knew to cuddle with Wei Luo and monopolize her bosom and arms. He would occasionally blink, stick his tongue out, and yawn. His expressions were plentiful and fun to look at.

During the banquet, Wei Luo held him in her arms and was reluctant to let him go. After the banquet ended, they returned to Zhao Yang Hall and Wei Luo personally gave Zhao Xi his bath. Afterwards, she placed him down on an arhat-style rattan bed with a red sandalwood frame and carefully wrapped him up in swaddling clothes.

Wei Luo's body had recovered pretty well during the past month.



Perhaps, it was because she had gotten out of bed and walked around every day. Her waistline had slimmed down very quickly. There wasn't any difference between her and a teenage girl that hadn't given birth.

Her cheeks had become sharp again and her skin continued to be white and soft. If little watermelon didn't resemble her so much, people wouldn't be able to tell that she was someone who had recently given birth.

## Chapter 168.3

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At this time, Wei Luo's eyelashes were lowered. She wasn't experienced with putting on the swaddling clothes and little watermelon was acting naughty. One moment he was kicking, the next moment he was stretching his arm. His playing around caused Wei Luo to not be able to put on his swaddling clothes for a long time. Fortunately, there was a heater in the room, so he wasn't in danger of catching a cold.

Surprisingly, Wei Luo wasn't annoyed. She helplessly touched Zhao Xi's little nose and said, "Stop moving. If you keep moving around, mother will be angry."

Zhao Xi's long eyelashes fluttered as he blinked. When he looked at Wei Luo, it seemed as if he could understand her words.

Wei Luo quickly finished wrapping Zhao Xi in the swaddling clothes. She lowered her head, kissed Zhao Xi's forehead, and praised him, "So obedient."

On the side, Zhao Jie sneered as he watched them.

As soon as Wei Luo raised her head, she saw Zhao Jie's long face and couldn't feeling surprised. She asked, "What's wrong?"

Zhao Jie said, "Imperial mother also likes him a lot. How about giving him to her and letting her raise him instead?"

Wei Luo's eyes immediately widen. She instinctively said, "No." He was her child. She felt that she didn't even have enough time to spend with him and spoil him. How could she bear to give him to someone else?

Zhao Jie silently looked at her. His expression was very ugly.

Wei Luo finally realized there was something wrong. She left Zhao Xi on the arhat bed and sat down across from Zhao Jie. "Are you upset?"

Zhao Jie lowered his eyes and looked at her in askance. A while later, he said, “You tell me. How many days have you given me the cold shoulder?”

Uhhh. Wei Luo awkwardly fidgeted with her fingers. She finally understood why his expression had looked so bad. But, she hadn’t treated him coldly. She had just slightly liked little watermelon too much... What mother wouldn’t love her son? Wei Luo felt as if she was being unjustly treated, but it wouldn’t be good for her express this feeling. After all, Zhao Jie needed to be comforted more than her.

Thus, she said, “I didn’t give you the cold shoulder. You’re so much older than little watermelon. You can take care of yourself, but little watermelon can’t, so I have to care of him. Besides, you were the one that said, ‘I don’t like children. I only like this child because of you.’ Do you not like little watermelon anymore? Are you really going to be jealous over him?”

The words, “I’m jealous”, was clearly written on Zhao Jie’s normally expressionless face.

It was only now that Wei Luo realized how petty men could be. She wrapped her arms around Zhao Jie’s arm and raised her head to look at him. “Then, what do I have to do so that you won’t give him to imperial mother? Little watermelon is my son. I want to raise him myself.”

Zhao Jie’s black eyes turned and landed on Wei Luo’s body.

His prolonged stare made Wei Luo feel goosebumps rising on her body. She almost called out, “big brother” to beg him to stop.

He finally moved. He raised his hand and tapped his own cheek. His beautiful, deep voice said, “Kiss me.”

So, he had minded when she had recently kissed Zhao Xi’s forehead. Wei Luo pursed her lips. It wasn’t like she hadn’t kissed him before, so she held onto his neck and sincerely kissed his

cheek with her small mouth. In order to curry favor with him, after she kissed his cheek, she slowly moved her lips to his mouth as she fluttered her eyelashes. She licked his lips and teeth to open them.

Wei Luo raised her eyes to secretly look at him and saw Zhao Jie's lowered eyes looking at her. His pupils were pitch-black and he wasn't showing any reaction.

Wei Luo closed her eyes to temper herself and rushed into his mouth. Because she had the intention of pleasing him, it was a very lingering kiss.

A moment later, Zhao Jie turned himself over to press her down, seized control, and besieged her mouth.

...

A long time later, Zhao Jie finally let go Wei Luo's mouth, but he stayed in the same position with his face touching hers. They were very close as he hoarsely said, "In the future, you're not allowed to only show affection towards little watermelon."

Wei Luo's tongue had become numb from his sucking. Her eyes were watery and she was quietly gasping.

Zhao Jie bit her ear and added, "You have to show that you love me too."

Wei Luo's cheeks turned red and she slowly nodded.

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A month later, Wei Luo and Zhao Jie moved out of Zhao Yang Hall and brought little watermelon with them as they returned home.

After the three of them left, Zhao Yang Hall instantly became a lonelier and colder place.

Empress Chen moved back to Zhao Yang Hall after Emperor Chong Zhen lost his reason to keep her in his hall.

During this past month, although they didn't exchanged many words while they lived under the same roof, Emperor Chong Zhen felt that it was still better than living in his hall by himself. Seeing Empress Chen leaving him without any hesitation, he felt that Yang Xin Hall was too spacious and empty. He actually felt somewhat not used to living here alone now.

A few days later, Empress Chen came to the imperial study of her own initiative to look for him and he felt quite overwhelmed by her favor.

Zhao Zhi Qing had become injured in order to save the empress. Most of the injuries had been healed after the past month of care and he didn't bring this topic up. Empress Chen had also kept silent. The two of them had a tacit understanding to not mention this matter as if this fire had never occurred. Zhao Zhi Qing clearly knew that he was lying to himself, but he didn't want to say the truth. He was scared that if he said anything, then even the shallow peace between them couldn't be kept.

Empress Chen stood in front of the red sandalwood table with curved edges and looked at the emperor, who was wearing a golden robe embroidered with dragons and auspicious clouds and sitting on his throne. She opened her mouth to say, "This consort has a request for His Majesty."

Emperor Chong Zhen looked at her and had a bad feeling. A while later, he said, "Please say it."

Empress Chen had probably already made up her mind. Neither fast nor slow, she said, "This consort wants to move to Shan An Temple to study and practice Buddhism. Your Majesty, please agree."

Emperor Chong Zhen tightened his grip on the report he was holding and stared at her.

Shan An Temple was a temple that had been renovated by the imperial family. It was outside the palace, but it wasn't far away. It

would only take about fifteen minutes to go there. It was only during the New Year that the palace would organize for imperial concubines to go there to burn incense and worship Buddha. Now, Empress Chen was offering to move there of her own initiative to study and practice Buddhism. Emperor Chong didn't return to his senses for a long time.

Empress Chen silently stood there as she waited for him to agree.

For a long time, Emperor Chong Zhen went back and forth between tightening and loosening his grip on the report he was holding. His voice was hoarse and sounded powerless as he asked, "Wan Wan, does this emperor really not have any chance left?"

## Chapter 168.4

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Empress Chen lowered her eyes and looked at the table in front of the emperor instead of looking at him. Her voice was smooth as she asked, “Your Majesty, are you agreeing?”

Emperor Chong Zhen walk out from behind his desk and stopped in front of Empress Chen. Only two steps separated them, but it felt as if they were at two different ends of the world. He gave an irrelevant answer, “Did you start the fire in Bao He Hall?”

After a moment of silence, Empress Chen nodded and said, “Yes.”

“Why did you do that?” Emperor Chong watched her as he finally asked the question that had been clogging his heart, “Have you really given up all hope towards this emperor?”

Empress Chen thought for a moment before she said, “Your Majesty, you don’t need to say these words. Your Majesty, you saved this consort. This consort is very grateful, but doesn’t have a reason to continuing living in the palace. If this consort continues to stay here, this consort will only do more foolish things.” She raised her eyes and looked at the man in front of her. In a flash, so many years had passed by. They actually looked like strangers in front of each other. The shadows of their past selves no longer existed.

“Your Majesty, you don’t need to compensate me for the things that happened in the past. I’ve already let go of past grudges. As the emperor, you have to shoulder and accept heavier responsibilities than the average person. Your actions were also reasonable. It’s only that my heart is small-minded and I can’t tolerate those choices.”

Emperor Chong Zhen quietly looked at her. He bitterly and painfully smiled, “So, you’re still unwilling to forgive this emperor.”

If she had let go past grudges, why wouldn't she look at him? Why would she insist on going to an unpleasant place like Shan An Temple? There was no way he would agree.

Empress Chen didn't respond.

Zhao Zhi Qing couldn't resist holding her hand. His voice was low and had a slight begging tone as he said, "Wan Wan, this emperor was wrong. This emperor shouldn't have neglected you, much less suppress House Chen behind your back. Could you please not leave this emperor? I'll properly compensate you for the past. In the future, I won't go to anyone else. I'll disband the imperial harem and only be with you. I'll abdicate my position as the emperor. We'll travel the world together. Didn't you use to say that you like the scenery in Wu county the most? We can settle down there. As long as it makes you happy, we never have to come back to the capital."

Empress Chen looked at Zhao Zhi Qing for a long time before expressionless taking her hand away from his. "Your Majesty, it's too late to say these words."

She looked as if she had thought of something. Her eyes seemed lost in thought for a moment. Soon after, she said in a slightly regretful tone, "Back when I wanted to hear these words, you would be in Ning-shi's bedroom. Everyone in the palace saw how much you valued her. You even granted her many special privileges. After Liuli's life was saved from the poison and I wanted to investigate to find the true culprit, you blamed me for being overly suspicious. You accused me of panicking and treating everyone as the enemy. Now, Ning-shi is dead and I don't have any other desires. Your Majesty, please take back your words. This consort just wants to peacefully live life. Your Majesty, please graciously permit this consort's only long-standing wish.

Emperor Chong Zhen's body trembled. His mood had plunged to a helpless all-time low from Empress Chen's words.



She had gained her peace. But what about him? Who would be with him to pass the lonely and long second half of his life?

Emperor Chong Zhen's voice was choked with emotion, "Wan Wan... this emperor doesn't want graciously permit."

Empress Chen froze for a moment. Soon after, her expression became cold and she said, "Then, this consort can only stay in Zhao Yang Hall and practice Buddhism. Your Majesty, please don't blame this consort."

The imperial study was quiet. Nothing could be heard from the outside. Eunuch Chu was holding his horsetail whisk as he stood outside the doors. He looked at the empty, azure sky above the imperial palace. He thought that if the empress could reconcile with the emperor, everything would be good again. During the past few days when the empress wouldn't pay attention the emperor, the emperor hadn't eaten much during his meals.

Emperor Chong Zhen raised his hand and briefly covered his eyes before firmly dragging his hand down from his face. His eyes were red and his voice was hoarse as he said, "Okay, this emperor agrees."

Empress Chen lowered her eyes and said, "Thank you very much, Your Majesty."

After Empress Chen left, Emperor Chong Zhen sat in the imperial study in a daze for a long time. It felt as if his entire body had been hollowed out.

When Eunuch Chu came into the study to bring tea and saw this sight, he was very frightened. He put down the colorful teacup and said, "Your Majesty? Your Majesty?"

Emperor Chong Zhen returned to his senses and looked around. Empress Chen had left a long time ago. He let out a long sigh and in a mournful tone, he said, "Eunuch Chu."

Eunuch Chu said, "This servant is here."

Emperor Chong Zhen closed his eyes and said, “This emperor’s heart... feels too painful.”

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Prince Jing’s residence.

Wei Luo discovered that babies really changed so fast. In only a short three months, little Zhao Xi had changed from a wrinkly little monkey to a beautiful baby boy that looked as if he was carved from white jade. Every day, Wei Luo would spend half the day playing with him. The little fellow liked Wei Luo the most. As soon as he saw her, he would start babbling happily and stretch out his short arms that resembled lotus roots for Wei Luo to pick him up. Wei Luo’s heart would melt every time she saw this.

This little fellow didn’t behave like Zhao Jie at all. Instead, he had the same personality as Wei Luo when she was a child. He liked to smile, cling to people, and act slightly mischievous. Wei Luo felt this was good too. Zhao Jie had a really strange personality. It wouldn’t necessarily be a good thing for their son to be like him.

As for the rest of the day... naturally, she had to spend it with a certain man.

As an adult, it was quite ridiculous of him to be jealous of his own son. In her mind, Wei Luo would criticize his shortcomings, but she wouldn’t dare to show this on her face. She could only obediently pander to him. It was probably because when Wei Luo showed that she cared more about their son than Zhao Jie, Zhao Jie’s face would sink and he would torment her once nighttime came.

With this in mind, how could Wei Luo dare to neglect him?

## Chapter 168.5

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Today, Wei Luo was shaking a rattle drum in front of little watermelon. The pellets attached to the red strings on the sides of the toy repeatedly struck the surface of the toy and produced a “ding dong ding dong” sound each time. Little watermelon’s large black eyes followed the movement of the rattle drum. His laughter never stopped as he stretched his hand out to try to grab the toy in Wei Luo’s hand. Wei Luo used a silk handkerchief to wipe the drool from the corners of his mouth.

“Look at you. You’re drooling again. Little watermelon, you’re so dirty.”

Little Zhao Xi didn’t understand her words. He just wanted the rattle drum.

Wei Luo didn’t give him the toy. She deliberately moved it slightly farther away and shook the toy in the air. “Do you want it?”

Little Zhao Xi was very anxious. He gurgled as he continued to stretch his hand out. Unfortunately, his soft, fleshy arm was too short. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn’t reach the toy.

Wei Luo didn’t tease him for too long. She soon put the rattle drum in his hand and little Zhao Xi happily held it. He was young and his hand was small, so he didn’t have a good hold on it, much less know how to play with it. There was only way to express his fondness – putting it in his mouth. Only a short time had passed before the sides of the toy was covered in his saliva. His large, limpid eyes that didn’t understand anything yet looked at Wei Luo and he opened his mouth to babble.

Wei Luo took the rattle drum from his hand, wiped the drool from his chin again, and furrowed her brow. “Aiya, why are you such a glutton? You can’t eat this. It’s dirty.” As she said this, she scratched little Zhao Xi’s nose.

Little Zhao Xi didn't understand her actions, but he didn't fuss. His eyes turned and he looked behind Wei Luo.

Wei Luo noticed his gaze and turned around to look. Zhao Jie had recently come inside. There was a strong, cold wind blowing outside. When he came inside, he brought in a gust of the cold air inside with him. He didn't directly walk to Wei Luo and Zhao Xi. First, he went to the nearby fireside to warm his hands. When the coldness in his body has vanished, he went over to them and asked, "What happened? Is watermelon not listening to you?"

Wei Luo shook her head and said, "No." She helped Zhao Jie take off his fox fur cloak and asked, "Did you go to the palace? How is His Majesty's health?"

Zhao Jie's tone was calm as he said, "It's not good. He couldn't even leave his bed yesterday."

Wei Luo didn't say anything after hearing these words.

Since Empress Chen moved to Shan An Temple two months ago, Emperor Chong Zhen fallen gravely ill and hadn't recovered. Medicine hadn't been effective. He had been a perfectly healthy person, who had suddenly fallen ill without any prior symptoms. During the past two months, the imperial physicians had taken turns trying to treat Emperor Chong Zhen to no effect. Emperor Chong Zhen hadn't gone to the morning court to listen to the courtiers and decide on political affairs for over half a month. He had ordered Zhao Jie to act as a temporary regent and handle the governmental affairs on his behalf. Thus, Zhao Jie had been very busy lately with this work. He would frequently leave early and return late. He hadn't been able to properly spend time with Wei Luo for a long time.

Zhao Jie held Wei Luo's hand, furrowed his eyebrows, and said, "Why is your hand so cold?"

Wei Luo said, "The weather is too cold. I recently went outside to sweep some of the snow from the plum blossoms. I can use it to

make tea in the coming year.”

Zhao Jie felt heartache. “In the future, have the servants do this instead. What if you freeze yourself doing this?”

Wei Luo said, “This type of thing is only fun if I do it myself. It won’t be fun if someone else does it for me.”

Zhao Jie didn’t argue about this with her. He had servants bring in two more burning charcoal basins, brought Wei Luo onto his lap, and warmed her hands with his hands. Zhao Jie’s big hands firmly wrapped around Wei Luo’s hands and very quickly warmed them up.

Lately, it was rare for Zhao Jie to come home in time for dinner. After they finished dinner, a wet nurse carried little Zhao Xi back to the side room. Zhao Jie and Wei Luo washed up before lying down on their Chinese cedar bed that was decoratively carved with clouds.

Zhao Jie stretched his hand out to pull Wei Luo closer so that his chest was pressed against Wei Luo’s back and his chin was placed on her shoulder. He slowly and quietly said, “Ah Luo.”

Wei Luo was slightly sleepy and said, “En.”

Zhao Jie was silent for a while as if he was deliberating something, “I might not come back tomorrow. You and Xi-er have to properly stay home. Don’t go anywhere.”

Wei Luo opened her eyes and became less sleepy. “Why won’t you come back? Where are you going?”

Zhao Jie hugged her tighter, but his voice was as calm as always. “I’ve been busy with the governmental affairs recently. Imperial father hasn’t recovered from his illness, so I have to stay in the palace to deal with his work. Once these matters are handled, I’ll come back and spend time with you and Xi-er.

Wei Luo turned around and burrowed her soft, fragrant body into his arms. She spoke in a low voice, “Then, quickly finish your

work. Don't tire yourself out." After saying this, she added, "We have spent time together in a long time. I kind of miss you."

Zhao Jie felt deeply touched by her words. He lowered his head to kiss the top of Wei Luo's head. "Okay, in the future, I'll stay with you every day."

Wei Luo quietly said, "En." Soon after, she fell asleep.

Zhao Jie moved slightly back and parted Wei Luo's black hair back to see her small, soft, white face that was as lustrous as gems. Zhao Jie carefully stroked her face, from her eyebrows to her nose, from her nose to her mouth. Every time he moved his hand, he felt reluctant to let her go. After he had touched enough, he finally said, "Wait for me to return."

The next day, Zhao Jie left before the sun came up. During the past period, he had always left this early, so Wei Luo didn't think anything of it. Like every other day, she washed her face and ate breakfast before going to playing with little Zhao Xi.

When noon arrived, Wei Luo went to sit in the verandah while holding little Zhao Xi. It was cold outside, so Wei Luo had little Zhao Xi tightly wrapped up and only his black eyes were exposed. It was clearly noon, but the northern side seemed as if it was being burned. It seemed as if half the sky had turned red with orange clouds.

Wei Luo looked at the sky for a moment before deciding that it was too cold here and carried little Zhao Xi back inside.

## Chapter 168.6

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The little fellow had been perfectly fine, but a moment later, he suddenly started to wail. No matter how she tried to coax him, he wouldn't stop. He grasped the lapel of Wei Luo's robe and cried as if he was so sad that he wanted to die. Wei Luo felt heartache seeing him like this.

On the side, the wet nurse said, "The little heir is probably hungry. Let this servant feed him."

Wei Luo thought for a moment. She shook her head and said, "I'll do it. You can withdraw."

Since little Zhao Xi had been born, Wei Luo hadn't fed him milk many times. Wei Luo's milk wasn't much and Zhao Jie drank most of it, so little Zhao Xi didn't receive much of it. Coincidentally, Zhao Jie hadn't been home much during the past few days and Wei Luo had accumulated milk, so she fed it to Zhao Xi today. As expected, the little fellow was hungry. He sucked Wei Luo's nipple and started drinking. He didn't cry or fuss as he eagerly drank.

Wei Luo used her fingers to wipe the tears from his eyelashes. She said with a smile, "You're so silly. Crying just because you're hungry..."

The little fellow whimpered for a bit and continued drinking.

After Wei Luo finished feeding him milk, it was time for Zhao Xi to sleep. She carried him back to the cradle in the side room. After she coaxed him into sleeping soundly, she walked out of the room.

Bai Lan came into the courtyard. Her expression was slightly strange. She seemed as if she wanted to say something, but she kept stopping before the words came out. "Your Highness..."

Wei Luo asked, "What's wrong?"

Bai Lan followed Wei Luo inside. In a baffled voice, she said, "When this servant wanted to go out to buy something, this

servant saw many guards standing outside the residence. Not only are there guards at the front entrance, there's also guards protecting the corner and side entrances as well. What do you think is happening? Hasn't the capital been peaceful lately?"

Wei Luo paused. She turned around and asked, "Did you personally see this?"

Bai Lan nodded with certainty. "Your Highness, there isn't anything wrong with this servant's vision. This servant really did see this. There are many guards inside and outside the residence."

Wei Luo pursed her lips and thought of the words that Zhao Jie had said to her last night. She had thought those were just ordinary instructions. After all, Zhao Jie hadn't said anything else. However, from the current situation, it wasn't as simple as she had thought. What exactly was Zhao Jie planning? Why didn't he tell her? Was he in danger?

Wei Luo passed the afternoon with an unquiet mind. When little Zhao Xi woke up, Wei Luo brought him into her arms to coax.

Fortunately, the little fellow was very good. After she fed him, he played by himself. His large, dark, limpid, eyes would occasionally turn to look at her and he would babble sounds that nobody could understand.

By the time it was nightfall, Bai Lan had gone out and brought back shocking news.

The fifth prince and Prince Rui had rebelled! The two of them had brought all of the soldiers they had control over. They invaded the palace to force Emperor Chong Zhen to abdicate.

Wei Luo had been drinking tea. When she heard this news, her hand shook and the tea spilled onto her hand. Without thinking, she asked, "What about Zhao Jie?"

Bai Lan said, "This servant heard that His Highness Prince Jing is guarding Han Yuan Hall. This servant doesn't know the details of



the situation.” After saying this, she glanced at Wei Luo’s pale face and said, “Your Highness, the prince probably didn’t tell you anything because he didn’t want you to worry. Look, there are so many guards in the residence. You can see how much the prince cares about you.”

Wei Luo also knew this. At this moment, she shouldn’t be concerned about why Zhao Jie didn’t tell her anything. Instead, she was worried about his current safety. The fifth prince and Prince Rui had work together to instigate a rebellion. They had probably prepared for this in advance. Would Zhao Jie be able to stop them? Emperor Chong Zhen was also sick and probably wouldn’t be able to help. Wei Luo was very worried about Zhao Jie.

Preoccupied with these thoughts, Wei Luo walked back and forth. When she looked up, the sky wasn’t dark yet.

She didn’t know the situation in the palace. She wanted to send Bai Lan out to ask around, but the residence was too tightly guarded. Bai Lan had gone out too much and was stopped by the guards at the entrances.

The only thing that Wei Luo could do was wait.

Wei Luo barely closed her eyes this night. As soon as she closed her eyes, she would see Zhao Jie holding a sword and riding a horse. She was scared of seeing something happening to him, so she sat on the couch that was near the window the entire night until the sky gradually revealed a smear of pale blue. This night had finally passed.

Wei Luo jumped down from the couch, hurriedly washed her face, and started to walk out of the room.

Seeing this sight, Jin Lu and Bai Lan hurriedly stopped her. “Your Highness, where are you going?”

Wei Luo said, “I’m going to go and ask what’s happening in the

palace.”

Jin Lu and Bai Lan couldn't stop her. They could only take out a fox fur cloak for her to put on and go with her. But, just as they walked to the front entrance, two black-robed guards stopped them.

One of the guards said, “Greetings, Your Highness. The prince has ordered for the princess consort and little heir to remain in the residence. It's dangerous outside. Your Highness, please return.”

Wei Luo didn't go back. She looked at the guard and said, “Tell me, how is the prince right now? Where is he?”

The guard's expression didn't change. He said, “To respond to the princess consort, this subordinate doesn't know. This subordinate's task is to protect the princess consort.”

Wei Luo didn't move. She looked towards the north side of the capital from the front entrance. The palace seemed exceptionally tranquil. What was happening there?”

She bit her bottom lip. A moment later, she made her decision. She pushed the two guard's swords and said, “Step aside!”

She couldn't keep waiting. She had to know how Zhao Jie was.

The guards didn't dare to injure her. They hurriedly put away their swords. A flash of imposingness had let her walk out of the residence.

The guards chased after her. They hadn't run far before they saw a large military group ahead of them. They immediately stopped.

Wei Luo stood outside of the residence's entrance and saw people riding horses as they headed towards here from far away.

## Chapter 168.7

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Very quickly, a man on a horse stopped in front of Wei Luo. The wind brought over the scent of blood. Zhao Jie flipped over and dismounted from the horse. He hadn't had time to change out of his full suit of ming guang armor and the sword that was hanging on his waist was still stained with blood from beheading someone recently. Zhao Jie looked at the scene in front of him. First, he coldly swept his gaze across the guards behind Wei Luo, then he looked at her. His voice was clearly gentle as he said, "Why did you come out? Didn't I tell you to stay at home?"

Wei Luo flattened her mouth and blamed him, "It's your fault for not explaining things clearly. Why did you hide such a monumental matter from me?"

Zhao Jie curved his lips and said, "I didn't want to make you worry."

She complained angrily in heart. She would only be more worried if he acted so mysteriously! But, seeing that he was completely fine, she let out a sigh in relief. She couldn't help rushing over into his arms.

Zhao Jie instinctively retreated half a step and said, "I'm dirty."

Wei Luo didn't care. She tightly hugged his waist. She could feel the heat of his body even with ming guang armor between them. She furiously said, "If you ever do this again, I'll never forgive you."

Zhao Jie helplessly smiled. He stroked her hair, "En. In the future, I'll tell you everything."

Thus, the group of subordinates watched as their cold-blooded prince hugged his princess consort in front of everyone. His warm and pampering expression made him look as if he wasn't the same person that had recently beheaded Prince Rui with one slash of his

sword. Zhao Jie hugged Wei Luo for a long time without moving. When Wei Luo stopped being angry and raised her head, her face immediately turned red in embarrassment when she saw the numerous soldiers standing behind him.

Zhao Jie chuckled. He turned around and said to the group of people, “Yu Zhi, bring everyone back to Shen Ji Barracks and wait for this prince’s orders.”

Yu Zhi acknowledged his order and led the group of soldiers back to Shen Ji Baracks.

Wei Luo held Zhao Jie’s hand, turned around, and started heading back to their home with hurried steps, “Come with me.”

She hadn’t properly settled the score with him yet.

---

When the fifth prince and Prince Rui had tried to force the emperor to abdicate, Zhao Jie had killed Prince Rui on the spot and locked up the fifth prince in the imperial prison. He had stripped away his title of prince. After a date was selected, he would be exiled a thousand kilometers away. Prince Rui’s household was also punished for his crime. The men would be exiled and the women would be sold as slaves. Prince Rui’s heir, Zhao Jue, couldn’t endure hardship on the way to being sent to exile and died of exhaustion on the road. Rumors said that he wasn’t even buried with a decent tombstone. He was casually left behind in a desolate area in the countryside.

It was only now that Wei Luo found out about the truth. Emperor Chong Zhen had faked his recent grave illness to lure Prince Rui and Zhao Zhang’s ambitions to the surface.

Zhao Jie had clearly known the truth, but he hadn’t revealed a word of this to Wei Luo.

Wei Luo felt truly angry for a while.

After the attempt at forcing the emperor to abdicate, Emperor

Chong Zhen used the excuse of his poor health as a reason to pass his throne to Zhao Jie.

The civil and military officials had all witnessed Zhao Jie pacifying the attempted rebellion and no one objected to Emperor Chong Zhen's decision this time. After discussing which auspicious day the event should be held, the officials urged Zhao Jie to ascend as the new emperor.

However, Zhao Jie wasn't as anxious as them. Emperor Chong Zhen continued to be the emperor for two more months while he brought Wei Luo and little Zhao Xi to Jiangnan for a vacation. Because Zhao Jie had promised Wei Luo that he would properly spend time with her after finishing his official work, this vacation ended up lasting two months and made Emperor Chong Zhen and the court officials very anxious.

Emperor Chong Zhen was impatient because he wanted to go to Shan An Temple to look for Wan Wan. The officials were fretful because Emperor Chong Zhen didn't attend morning court. With no one to take charge of the governmental affairs, the accumulated stacks of reports to the emperor were almost as large as a mountain!

After Zhao Jie finally returned from Jiangnan, Emperor Chong Zhen officially abdicated. Zhao Jie sat on the golden throne carved with dragons. He was wearing the emperor's ceremonial robes and imperial crown with twelve rows of pearls. His expression was calm as he faced the kowtowing military and civil officials. He raised his hand and said, "You may all rise."

Zhao Jie only exchanged a few sentences with the officials before hurriedly leaving Jin Hall and returning to Wu Shuang Hall.

Zhao Jie had specially ordered for this hall to be built for Wei Luo. The construction had started before they left for Jiangnan. Zhao Yang Hall would be left reserved for Empress Chen. Also, Wu Shuang Hall was closer to the emperor's personal hall than Zhao

Yang Hall. Of course, in the future, Zhao Jie would probably only stay at Wu Shuang Hall.

Wu Shuang Hall's layout and ornaments was somewhat similar to Prince Jing's residence. Everything was arranged in accordance to Wei Luo's preference.

There was a large greenhouse behind this hall. Inside the greenhouse, there were expensive flowers that Zhao Jie had ordered to people to find and bring back. There was a swing next to the greenhouse. Across from the swing, there was a grape trellis. During summer, Wei Luo would be able to cool off in the shade and easily eat fresh grapes. Wei Luo naturally liked this back garden.

She carried Zhao Xi as she walked around. She asked, "Little watermelon, do you like this?"

Zhao Xi stretched out his short arms that resembled lotus roots and babbled towards the swing. It was evident that he taken a fancy to the swing, so Wei Luo carried him over there to play.

When Zhao Jie came back, he happened to see Wei Luo sitting on the swing while holding little Zhao Xi, who resembled a rice ball. They leisurely swung back and forth.

Wei Luo's eyes were lowered to look at little Zhao Xi. Perhaps, he was feeling happy from playing on the swing. The little fellow jubilantly curved his eyes into smiling crescents. His smile was infectious and Wei Luo also curved her large eyes in response. She scratched his little nose. This pair of adult and child had similar faces. Zhao Jie stood close by and silently looked them. He didn't know when his own lips had also curved into a smile.

Wei Luo always brought him a sense of satisfaction; even becoming emperor hadn't given him this feeling.

Zhao Jie walked forward and asked, "Do you like this place?"

Wei Luo raised her head to look at him. She smiled and nodded. "I like it. Little watermelon likes it a lot too." She suddenly

thought of something and asked, “Don’t you have to meet with the military and civil officers? Why did you come back so early?”

Zhao Jie stopped in front of her, leaned over, gently touched her forehead, and said, “I came back to keep my wife company.”

Wei Luo pursed her lips and cast him a rebuking glance. “You’ve become the emperor and you’re still not acting proper.”

Zhao Jie chuckled. He said into her ear, “Properness is for outsiders to see. In front of Ah Luo, I don’t need to be proper.”

T/N: It doesn't feel very final, but this is the end to the main story. Chapter 169 and 170 is a side story for Li Song. Chapter 171 is the epilogue to the main story from Zhao Jie and Wei Luo's POVs.

# Chapter 169.1

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When Li Song woke up, the sky was still dark and the room was quiet. There was a lit lamp on the red sandalwood table that was decoratively carved with hornless dragons. It was barely able to illuminate the darkness of the room. Li Song furrowed his eyebrows, sat up on the bed, and slowly looked around the room with his deep and dark eyes: a vermillion-lacquered table with curved edges, inlaid with gold, and decoratively carved with spirals, light green curtains, a divider painted with a charming scene of bamboo and evergreen in the mountains, and there was a sword hanging on the left side of the room.

This was his room in Prince Ru Yang's residence.

There was a strange expression on Li Song's face. He couldn't help clenching his hand into a fist. Prince Ru Yang's residence had been confiscated of their valuable possession five years ago and he had left that place since then. How did he suddenly return?

Li Song remembered that after he had ridden a horse between two snow-capped peaks, the ground shook and the accumulated snow on the mountaintops had fallen down without warning. He didn't die? Li Song raised his hands. The dim lighting was enough for him to see that his hands were perfectly fine. He felt even more doubtful.

Perhaps, he was dreaming.

Li Song glanced out the window and saw the early morning light and mist. It seemed as if it had drizzled last night. The air was saturated with dampness. He quietly sat at the head of the bed without moving while leaning against a large pillow embroidered with silver thread. His expression was cold like frozen water.

When the first rays of sunlight entered the room, he slightly raised his eyes. The sun was especially gentle as it shined on the light colored butterfly-shaped birthmark underneath his eye. His



face looked even more captivating underneath the sunlight. Li Song slightly narrowed his eyes. He hadn't experienced such a peaceful morning in a long time.

He heard the sound of footsteps starting from the verandah and stopping at his doors. Someone pushed open the doors and entered his room. As the person headed towards his inner room, he said, "Young Master, why did you wake up so early today? It's still early morning. Aren't you going to go out at noon? You can still sleep some more."

It was Li Song's personal servant, Lu Shi.

Li Song furrowed his eyebrows and stared at him.

Lu Shi had served him for over a decade and had been very loyal to House Li. However, when House Li had been punished, his elderly mother had asked him to return to his hometown. Li Song had heard he had met with an accident on the way there and had died a few days later. Why would he appear again? Li Song's eyes deepened. If this was really a dream, this dream was a bit too realistic.

Seeing that Li Song wasn't responding, Lu Shi was confused and asked again, "Young Master, what's wrong? Are you not feeling well somewhere? This servant can call for a doctor to see you." Normally, Li Song wouldn't have ignored him. However, Li Song only rubbed the spot between his eyebrows without saying a word today.

"Young Master?" Lu Shi asked.

A long time later, Li Song said with a hoarse voice, "I'm fine."

Lu Shi skeptically looked at Li Song. Other than his complexion not looking good, he wasn't any different from usual. Lu Shi didn't continue to ask questions. After he waited upon Li Song with putting on his clothes and washing his face, he withdrew from the room and prepared to have people bring in breakfast. However,

right after he had stepped one foot past the doorway, someone came bustling over here and almost collided with him. Without any greeting, the person went straight to the inner room.

There was only one person in the Prince Ru Yang's household that could act this willfully and rashly. It was first miss Li Xiang.

Li Xiang was wearing an a short, dark yellow top embroidered with a hundred silver butterfly and flowers and an indigo pleated skirt embroidered with white flowers. She arrived at Li Song's bedside like a gust of wind.

She was born with a beautiful appearance. Her teeth were white, her lips were red, her eyes were almond-shaped, and her cheeks were rosy. Even when she was frowning, she still had a lovable charm that affected other people. Li Xiang pouted and questioned, "Older brother, why haven't you done the thing you promised me?"

Li Song looked at her and couldn't help wrinkling his brow slightly. Quite a while later, he asked, "What?"

Seeing that he wasn't showing a response, Li Xiang thought he was going to go back on his word. She took out a small, white and blue porcelain bottle from her sleeve and stuffed it into Li Song's hand. "This bottle has five minerals powder. I had the servants buy it. You promised me that would get Wei Chang Hong to use this. You can't go back on your word."

After saying this, she saw that Li Song hadn't shown any reaction and softened her voice to say, "Older brother, you know that I don't want to marry Wei Chang Hong. This is the only way to get father and mother to be willing to cancel the engagement. Aren't you going to Yu He today? I heard that Wei Chang Hong would also be going? Pretty please, just give him this bottle when you see him..."

Wei Chang Hong.

Li Song lowered his eyes and looked at the white and blue porcelain bottle in his left hand. Memories that he wanted to forget but couldn't forget gradually filled his mind. During the five years he had been gone, he had traveled all over the country and seen all of the lakes and rivers. But, he still couldn't erase that point of obsession in his mind. At the mention of anything related to her, he couldn't help becoming preoccupied with thoughts about her.

Li Song still hadn't said a word. Li Xiang inevitably felt somewhat anxious. Once again, she called out, "Older brother."

Then, she sat down on the bed, grasped Li Song's arm, and said, "Older brother, this five minerals powder won't kill Wei Chang Hong. It'll only worsen his reputation a little bit. I'm a girl. I can't ruin my reputation by canceling an engagement without any reason. It's father and mother's fault for insisting that I marry him."

Worried about this matter, Li Xiang mumbled about this for a while until Li Song finally furrowed his brow and said, "Okay."

Li Xiang immediately stopped speaking.

Li Song held the white and blue porcelain bottle in the hollow of his hand and said to Li Xiang without looking at her, "You can leave now."

Li Xiang knew that he was feeling impatient from his expression. She wanted to say more, but she felt timid after seeing Li Song's cold and cryptic expression, so she unwillingly walked out of the room.

After Li Xiang left, there was no one speaking garrulously next to him. Li Song silently sat on the bed in a daze for a moment and thought of the warmth he had felt when Li Xiang had touched him. The touch felt too real. It didn't feel like a dream.

He heavily fell back down on the bedding. The framework of the

bed was sturdy and only lightly swayed. Li Song raised a hand and covered his eyes. On the surface, he still seemed calm, but his body was taut and his arms were faintly trembling as if he was trying to restrain his emotions at all costs.

This wasn't a dream. Lu Shi was here. Li Xiang was a fourteen-year-old girl right now. He had actually returned to the past.

But, when had Li Xiang and Wei Chang Hong been engaged? Li Song remembered that although his parents originally had this idea, there had been conflict between Li Xiang and Wei Luo during the annual hunting competition and she later injured Wei Chang Hong by shooting an arrow at him. The marriage talks between the two families failed and his parents never mentioned this matter again. How could Li Xiang be engaged to Wei Chang Hong right now?

Li Song lied on the bed without moving. A long time later, he finally slowly moved his hand away from his eyes. His red and gloomy eyes were unfathomable. No one would be able to tell what he had just decided.

## Chapter 169.2

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A private room on Yu He's second floor.

Li Song was wearing a light silk plain navy blue robe and sitting at a small black-lacquered table. There was an open window behind him. He leaned against the window frame with his eyes half closed and indifferently looked at the people around him.

These people were his past friends and they were all lounge lizards that idled their time away. They were currently grouped around a small table and in high spirit as they threw dice. In the past, Li Song would have also been there playing with them, but now he couldn't make himself feel the slightest interest.

Perhaps, he had been wandering for too long and was already unfamiliar with this type of lifestyle. It was difficult for him to blend in.

Li Song slowly traced the edge of his celadon cup. He seemed lost in thought. He hadn't said a word since he entered this room.

One of the nearby young men wearing a black robe that was embodied with a branching lotus pattern approached him. He curiously looked over Li Song and deliberately said, "Something is fishy. What's wrong with our Young Master Li? Why are you so silent today? You're the best at this game. Are you not playing with us because you're worried that we'll lose too badly to you? Aiya, say something. Are you in a bad mood? Who angered you?"

This person was the assistant minister of revenue's young son, Chen Hong Sheng. He always had the best relationship with Li Song. Although he was an overly talkative person, his character was pretty good.

Li Song turned the cup in his hand and quietly said, "It's nothing."

Chen Hong Sheng didn't believe him. After looking at him for a

while, he pretended as if he suddenly realized something and said, "I heard that you invited Duke Ying's family's Sixth Young Master here. Did you want to beat him up? Isn't he going to marry your younger sister soon? Are you dissatisfied with him?"

Li Song was silent for a moment before casting a rebuking glance at Chen Hong Sheng, "You say too much nonsense."

Chen Hong Sheng choked back the words he was about to say and embarrassedly stroke his nose. He sat back down in his original spot. It felt as if he had been too nosy.

The atmosphere in the private room became livelier and livelier as the wine cups were refilled again and again. The crowd's mood was very excited when the doors were opened from the outside.

Wei Chang Hong appeared at the private room's doorway. He was wearing a moon white robe embroidered with honeysuckle. His tied up hair and tidy clothes was completely incompatible with the atmosphere in the private room.

The people in the room were either sitting or leaning against something. They were all unsteadily swaying and none of them were behaving properly. In contrast, Wei Chang Hong's back was ramrod straight and his eyes were clear. He swept his gaze lightly and calmly around the room and stopped at Li Song. He went straight to the point and asked, "What did you want to talk about?"

Everyone in the private room was looking at him. Perhaps, his noble aura was too dazzling. The people that had been drinking stopped drinking. The people that had been playing stopped playing. They all silently sat up straight.

Li Song looked at Wei Chang Hong without reveal his intentions. He felt as if this person was slightly the same and slightly different from the Wei Chang Hong that he knew. He raised his chin and pointed at the spot on the other side of the small, black-lacquered table. "Sit."

Wei Chang Hong wasn't afraid of him. He stood still for a long time before sitting down across from Li Song. His eyes were as indifferent as before and he was even less talkative than the Wei Chang Hong that he knew.

Li Song poured wine into a celadon cup and placed it in front of Wei Chang Hong.

Wei Chang Hong didn't move. He only continued to look at Li Song. He was probably waiting for Li Song to say why he had invited him here.

The corners of Li Song's mouth curved up. With an unclear meaning, he said, "It's not poisoned."

Wei Chang Hong wasn't afraid that the wine had poison. There was a constant stream of guests in Yu He. If something happened to him, they wouldn't be able to escape. He just simply didn't want to drink it. However, the surrounding lounge lizards were all staring at him as if they had already expected that he wouldn't dare to drink. Their eyes were all filled with delight as they anticipated his misfortune. Without changing his expression, Wei Chang Hong picked up the wine cup in front of him and drank it in one gulp. He placed the wine cup back onto the table, stood up, and said, "If there's nothing else, I'm leaving."

Li Song stopped him, "How could there be nothing else? If there was nothing else, why would I invite you here today?" He smiled as he said, "Sir Wei, you have a good temperament. I'll drink this cup of wine as a toast to you."

He picked up the wine cup, tilted his head back, and also cleanly drank the wine.

Following his movement, something dropped from his sleeve and rolled over to Chen Hong Sheng.

Chen Hong Sheng picked up the item and asked, "Eh, what's this?"

Li Song's expression didn't change. With his lips slightly curved, he said, "Five minerals powder."

Chen Hong Sheng, "..."

Wei Chang Hong stared at Li Song. His gaze had immediately become colder.

Li Song took the five minerals powder back from Chen Hong Sheng. He held it in his palm and gradually increased his strength until he shattered the porcelain bottle. The five minerals powder spilled out from his hand and landed on the small, black-lacquered table. A short while later, blood dripped down from Li Song's hand and mixed with the five minerals powder. They clotted together on the surface of the table.

Li Song raised his eyes to look at Wei Chang Hong with a rather mocking gaze. "Don't worry, this wasn't in the wine that you drank. You have a wonderful older sister. If she knew that I deceived you into using five minerals powder, she would probably stab me again."

The people in the room were struck dumb by this scene. Chen Hong Sheng's widen his eyes and asked, "Ah Song, doesn't that hurt?"

Li Song didn't answer him. He coldly looked at Wei Chang Hong with a fake smile.

Wei Chang Hong's eyebrows were furrowed, but his tone was still indifferent as he asked, "What did you say?"



## Chapter 169.3

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Li Song thought he was only putting on act, so he said, “But I’m somewhat curious. Why did you agree to this engagement? Did Wei Luo not tell you that I was the one that shot you in the hunting grounds?”

Right not, it should be shortly after the hunting competition. Li Xiang had recently injured Wei Chang Hong. It was strange that he would still agree to this engagement.

Wei Chang Hong stood in silence for a moment. His eyes were even colder than before. He only glanced at Li Song before directly leaving the private room.

That look... How to describe it? It was as if he was looking at a lunatic.

After Wei Chang Hong left, Chen Hong Sheng said to Li Song, “Are you crazy? How could you break that thing with you bare hand? You seem kind of off today. House Wei’s Fifth Miss Wei Luo had already died ten years ago. Why did you mention her for no reason...”

Before he could finish speaking, Li Song tightly grabbed his shoulder with his other hand. Li Song’s expression was terrifying as he asked, “What did you say?”

Chen Hong Sheng said, “I asked if you're crazy...”

Li Song involuntarily increasing the strength he was holding Chen Hong Sheng’s shoulder.

Chen Hong Sheng yelped and trembled as he continued to say, “Wei Chang Hong only has a younger sister. Her mother is Fifth Master Wei’s second wife. His younger sister is called... I think she’s called Wei Zheng. Oh, Wei Chang Hong’s fraternal twin, Wei Luo, died ten years ago.... Aiya, why would you mention this? I only know about this because my mother mentioned this once.”

As he said this, he saw that Li Song's expression gradually became confused. Li Song had also loosened his grip on his shoulder, so he added, "But it's such a pity. Based on Wei Chang Hong's looks, Wei Luo would have become an outstanding beauty when she grew up. What a pity..."

Died?

Wei Luo died?

Impossible.

Heart palpating in fear, Li Song looked at his badly mutilated palm. He clearly remembered that little girl pushing himself into a lake when she was six years old. When she was seven years old, she had played a trick on him on the streets. When she was fifteen years old, they had met underneath the colored lanterns during the Spring Lantern Festival. Later, she had been engaged to Prince Jing Zhao Jie... Li Song slowly retracted his hand. He didn't even pick out the shards from the porcelain bottle from his hand before standing up and walking out.

Behind him, Chen Hong Sheng shouted, "Ah Song, where are you going?"

Lost in his thoughts, Li Song couldn't hear anything.

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When Li Song returned home, he immediately ordered people to investigate about Wei Luo's matter. Very quickly, he received his answer.

As it turns out, Wei Luo was different in this world. Wei Luo hadn't died like Chen Hong Sheng said. When Wei Luo was six years old, her stepmother, Du-shi, had taken her outside. Wei Luo had been kidnapped while they were on the way to somewhere. When Du-shi went back and brought people to look for her, they weren't able to find her. Duke Ying's household had grieved for a long time when they found out about this news originally. Later

on, Wei Luo's name was gradually forgotten as time passed. And now, people rarely mentioned her name.

When Li Song heard about this news, he expressionlessly leaned back against the chair that was decoratively carved with chrysanthemums and clouds. His eyes slightly darkened and his hands tightly gripped the armrests on the rosewood chair.

Puzzled, Lu Shi asked, "Young Master, why did you want this person investigated?"

Li Song didn't say a word. A short while later, he raised his hand and waved it to indicate for Lu Shi to leave.

He wanted to be alone.

After Lu Shi left, Li Song sat in his room for an entire afternoon by himself.

He had originally planned on doing nothing. He just wanted to have the chance to see her more. Unexpectedly, the heavens had been this cruel to him. Even though he had been reborn, the heavens didn't give him any hope. Li Song bitterly smiled and randomly picked up a book on the table to cover his face. He didn't want to let anyone see his expression right now.

Two days later, Li Song went to Duke Ying's residence because of Wei Chang Hong and Li Xiang's engagement.

At this time, their two families hadn't become enemies yet. Duke Ying and Wei Kun's attitude could be considered amiable. After the matters related to the happy occasion were settled, Li Song said his farewells and left Duke Ying's residence. Unexpectedly, a mishap suddenly happened to his carriage, so Duke Ying's steward arranged for a carriage for him to use. The carriage was parked at Duke Ying's household's corner entrance. Li Song walked to the corner entrance, went into the carriage, and ordered the carriage driver to bring him back to Prince Ru Yang's residence.

In the moment that he put down the curtain, his line of sight

shifted and he coincidentally caught a glimpse of a shadow near the corner entrance.

Li Song's paused and looked over there again. But, there was nothing there. It was as if that glimpse had just been his hallucination. The carriage started to slowly move forward and headed towards outside the alley.

Li Song blurted out, "Wait."

The carriage hurriedly yelled out, "Whoa!" to stop the horse. The carriage stopped on the side of the road.

Li Song stared at the corner wall for a long time. In the end, he couldn't resist his mind's intuition. Curious at the unexplained event, he got off the carriage and walked towards that corner wall. He didn't walk quickly. He was afraid of startling something away and also scared that he had been mistaken. It was clearly only a few steps away, but it felt as if it had taken him half a lifetime.

Li Song finally stopped in front of the corner wall and said towards the inside, "Who's in here?"

After he had waited for a long time, no one responded.

Li Song continued, "Come out."

Silence.

He had really been mistaken. Li Song lowered his eyes. He didn't know what feeling had temporarily gushed forth in his heart. Right now, he felt very dejected as if he had been hollowed out. There had been no point in his rebirth. He clenched his hand into a fist and forcefully punched the wall in front of him until there was a hole in the wall. The back of his hand had also been injured and was now stained with blood.

There was suddenly a faint sound from the inside of the wall. It sounded like a frightened and panicked kitten. Although the person was doing her best to suppress her voice, the sound was still captured by Li Song.

At first, Li Song was too surprised to react. Soon after, he stretched his hand into the corner wall without the slightest hesitation. He tightly grabbed a wrist and pulled the person out.

The person was suddenly pulled out into the sunlight. Her almond-shaped eyes were wide open and her mouth was slightly open. Her long eyelashes were like the wings of a butterfly. As they fluttered, it was as if that butterfly flew into Li Song's heart. Although she was wearing a simple and unadorned light purple jacket and skirt and her glossy hair was braided into two pigtails, it couldn't cover the beauty of her face.

Li Song stared at her until it felt as if he was going to cry. His heart softened. A long time later, he finally hardened his eyes and gritted his teeth as he said, "Wei Luo."

Wei Luo was currently trying to retract her wrist, but she wasn't able to do it. When she heard her name, she was startled and asked, "Do you know me?"

Li Song opened and closed his mouth, but he couldn't say a single coherent word.

In the end, he closed his eyes as his body continued to slightly tremble.

Not only did he recognize her, he would still recognize her even if she had changed into dust.

# Chapter 170.1

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When Li Song opened his eyes again, the young girl in front of him was looking at him with a confused expression.

He was holding her wrist so forcefully that her pink lips were tightly pursed. Her clear, black eyes were shining with uneasy and trepidation. Li Song continued to stare at her face without blinking. Although her face was slightly different from the Wei Luo that he knew, they were still the same person.

Just as he was about to say something, the corner entrance's door was suddenly pushed open by someone. An older female servant came out of the residence. She was wearing a honey-colored robe and harshly said without restraint, "Didn't I tell you to leave? What kind of place do you think Duke Ying's residence is? Is this a place that you can come and go as you please? Why don't you look at yourself? Why would Fifth Master agree to see you?" As she said this, she spat on the ground.

Li Song's brow twisted and he loosened his grip on Wei Luo's wrist. A moment later, Wei Luo broke free from him and ran towards the alley. She ran very quickly. By the time Li Song returned to his senses, she had already disappeared past the end of the alley.

Li Song had only felt as if something had left his grasp. He turned around to look at the older female servant that had an angry expression and asked, "What's going on?"

This older female servant's job was watching the corner entrance. She had just started working at Duke Ying's residence last year. When she saw how simply Wei Luo was dressed, she assumed that she was an impoverished girl trying to obtain money by pretending to be related to Fifth Master. Most likely, she knew one of the female servants in the residence and decided to use Fifth Master's name as a way to enter the residence.

This older female servant knew Li Song's identity, so her expression immediately changed. She piled on layer upon layer of smiles as she said, "Heir Li, you don't know. That girl had come here several times. She said she's looking for Fifth Master. How could Fifth Master be someone that she can meet just because she wants to? This servant has mentioned this matter to Fifth Madam. Fifth Madam had specially ordered this servant to not let that girl inside the residence..."

As the older female servant said a bunch of words, Li Song's face continued to sink the more he heard her speak.

In the end, he turned around without saying a word and headed in the direction that Wei Luo had left in.

Lu Shi saw that he wasn't coming back to the carriage, so he caught up to him and asked, "Young Master, where are you going? Weren't you going to go back home?"

Li Song didn't respond as he quickly walked.

Unfortunately, after he had searched the entire alley, he couldn't find any traces of Wei Luo. The end of the alley connected with a busy street. She had probably already run far away. Li Song stood at the end of the alley as people passed by him. His face was expressionless as he thought of the words that the older female servant had said. A long time later, he slammed his fist against the wall.

Lu Shi felt painful just looking at him. While he wondered why Li Song was acting so strangely today, he said with a smile, "Young Master, did you know that young girl?"

Li Song was silent for a moment. Instead of answering his question, he said, "Let's go back."

Lu Shi froze, but he quickly recovered and agreed. He went back to tell the carriage driver to drive the carriage here. He still didn't understand what had happened as they went back to Prince Ru

Yang's residence.

After they returned home, Li Song directly went to the study and ordered Lu Shi to investigate the matter of Duke Ying's family's Fifth Miss's kidnapping again.

Although Lu Shi didn't understand why he cared so much about a stranger, he still obediently withdrew to investigate this matter.

The news he brought back wasn't that much different from the previous time. It wouldn't be easy to thoroughly investigate this matter and get clear answers. Too much time had passed.

Li Song thought of the words that the older female servant had said. After contemplating for a long time, he said to Lu Shi, "Send a few people over to keep watch of Du-shi's actions. If there's any anomaly, immediately tell me."

Lu Shi nodded. Before he left, he couldn't resist asking, "Young Master, this insignificant one audaciously asks, do you know that Fifth Miss? Her kidnapping happened so long ago and Duke Ying's household doesn't even care about this matter anymore. Why do you still want to look into this matter?"

Li Song paused before saying, "I care because no one else is concerned about this matter."

This world seemed slightly different from his previous world. Wei Luo actually wasn't living as Duke Ying's family's Fifth Miss. Wei Chang Hong was engaged to Li Xiang. What went wrong? He had to get to the bottom of this.

Lu Shi hesitated, but didn't ask another question.

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Later, Li Song went to Duke Ying's residence two more times. He deliberately took a detour and left through the corner entrance each time, but he didn't see Wei Luo.

Today, Li Song came to Duke Ying's residence with Elder Princess



Gao Yang. Elder Princess Gao Yang had exchanged a few words with Fifth Madam Du-shi. She was probably hoping that after Li Xiang married into Duke Ying's family, Du-shi would treat Li Xiang magnanimously as her mother-in-law.

Du-shi was the daughter of a concubine and her status was much lower than Elder Princess Gao Yang's. Her attitude was very respectful and her tone was very amicable. She didn't show any disagreement towards Elder Princess Gao Yang's words.

When Elder Princess Gao Yang was leaving, Du-shi personally sent off the elder princess to the entrance with a smiling face from beginning to end.

Seeing that it had started to rain, Du-shi hurriedly had a servant girl bring over two umbrellas to Elder Princess Gao Yang.

After Elder Princess Gao Yang thanked Du-shi, she held a servant girl's hand for support as she went into her carriage. When she turned around, she saw Li Song standing in place. She asked, "Song-er, why aren't you coming? The raining is getting worse. Hurry and get inside the carriage. Don't let yourself catch a cold from standing in the rain."

Li Song returned to his senses and said to Elder Princess Gao Yang, "I'm going somewhere else first. I made plans with other people. Mother, you can go back home without me." Then, he accepted the oiled-paper umbrella from the servant girl, opened the umbrella, and went the other way with only Lu Shi following him.

Elder Princess Gao Yang called after him once. He seemed as if he hadn't heard her and continued walking away. He soon disappeared at the opening of an alley.

Elder Princess Gao Yang anxiously furrowed her eyebrows, "That child..."

## Chapter 170.2

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The drizzle was accompanied by a cold wind and soaked the sides of Li Song's sleeves. Because it was late autumn, there was a penetrating chilliness even though it wasn't raining heavily. For every step he took, Li Song felt as if his body was turning into ice. But, his expression didn't change and he arrived at Duke Ying's residence's corner entrance to see that its wooden doors were closed. He didn't see a fiendishly older female servant or a startled and terrified young girl here either.

Li Song stood in front of the corner entrance for a long time. His expression couldn't be clearly seen. The oil papered umbrella blocked most of his face and only his perfectly curved chin was exposed.

Lu Shi stood behind him and silently waited with him. After a while, seeing that Li Song wasn't moving at all, he finally asked, "Young Master, are you waiting for someone?"

Shortly after, Li Song finally moved. He strode towards the alley that was next to the corner entrance and threw down these words, "Wait for me here. You don't need to follow me."

Lu Shi was at a total loss. At first, he blindly followed Li Song for two steps. But, after seeing Li Song's unwavering steps, he slowly stopped. He looked at Li Song's back figure in confusion.

Li Song entered the alley where Wei Luo had disappeared into a few days ago. After taking several steps into the alley, the path became more and more narrow as he walked deeper into the alley.

The raindrops slid down from the eaves and dripped down onto the limestone path. The sound of the raindrops was both quiet and melodious. The surrounding area was unspeakably quiet because very few people went through this alley.

Li Song gradually slowed his pace and took a turn into another

alley. Last time, he hadn't taken this path and had directly left the alley into the bustling street. Today, he was walking slowly, so he had noticed this path.

Li Song walked several more steps before stopping in front of a place where the eaves were protruding. He lifted up his umbrella and started at the scene in front of him.

The girl underneath the eaves noticed that someone had come and slowly raised her head from her knees. She blinked her black, limpid, almond-shaped eyes. At first, she was so surprised that she didn't know how to react. Soon after, she faintly pursed her pink lips and observed Li Song for a while before slowly putting her head down. Her temperament was rather stubborn. She didn't say a word or make a sound. She just quietly curled up in the corner like an abandoned cat.

Last time, she had only been afraid because he had discovered her hiding in Duke Ying's residence's corner entrance. This time, she hadn't done anything wrong.

The two of them stayed like this. One was standing and the other was sitting. Neither of them spoke until the rain became heavier and the bottom of their clothes had become soaking wet.

When Wei Luo lifted up her skirt and shrank further back underneath the eaves, her pink, satin shoes that were embroidered with orchids were exposed. Although her clothes were old, they were very clean. Only her face was slightly dirty from the dust that had come off from the walls. She looked quite pitiful.

This was the first time that Li Song saw Wei Luo looking so pitiful. In his previous life, Wei Luo was always proud and willful. No matter what she was doing, she always behaved as if it was her natural right. Her unyielding spirit made people hate her to the point of wanting to gnash their teeth in anger, but it almost made people want to be closer to her.

He had never seen her so lonely and weak.

After Li Song had looked at her for a while, he suddenly lowered his eyes and chuckled.

When he laughed, he was quite good-looking. He had a handsome and elegant appearance to begin with, but because he usually acted arrogant and unrestrained, it made people have an instinctive dislike towards him.

Wei Luo couldn't make head or tail of his sudden laughter. She glanced at him before looking away and continuing to stare at her feet.

She originally thought she could easily reunite with her father after she found Duke Ying's residence. She hadn't expected that it would be so difficult to enter the residence. She had gone there several times, but she was driven away each time. Last time, it had been even more severe than usual. That older female servant had told the household's servants to teach her a lesson. Fortunately, she had run away quickly. Otherwise, who knows how badly she would have been beaten.

Wei Luo was feeling very gloomy. She didn't know when she would be able to see her father.

As she was thinking about this, Wei Luo noticed that the person next to her had slightly moved from her peripheral vision.

Li Song walked closed. Without giving time for Wei Luo to react, he leaned over and grabbed Wei Luo's wrist. He pulled her up, turned around, and started walking.

Startled, Wei Luo tried to move back and pry Li Song's hand from her wrist. She stared at him with her black, almond-shaped eyes and said, "Who are you? Where are you taking me? Let me go."

After leaving the shelter of the eaves, the heavy rain quickly drenched the hair in front of Wei Luo's forehead. Under the cleansing rain, her eyes became even clearer as if a layer of water

covered them. Her eyes reflected Li Song's figure.

Li Song let go of her wrist and moved the umbrella over her head. He lowered his eyes to look at her wrist. The part of her wrist that he had been holding onto before had already turned red. There was even a light circle of green above the red mark. It was probably from him injuring her the last time they had met. The bruise still hadn't healed.

He remembered that he had been very forceful at the time because he had been scared that she would run away.

Li Song raised the hand that had been at his side and gently moved her soaked, loose hair behind her ears. He looked at her with a burning gaze as he said, "Come with me."

Wei Luo directly looked at him and saw a predatory gleam in his eyes that wouldn't allow any refusal. She instinctively shook her head and said, "No..." After saying this, she turned around and started to run away from him. She definitely didn't know this person. Why did he keep looking for her? Did he want to kidnap and sell her? Wei Luo thought of that childhood memory and a chill went up from the soles of her feet. She couldn't go with him.

Li Song caught up with her and grabbed her hand. This time, he didn't use all of his strength to seize her wrist. He only tightly held her fingers and didn't let her go. "Wei Luo. I'll say it one more time. Come with me."

Wei Luo stared at him with wide eyes, "Who are you?"

## Chapter 170.3

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Li Song froze for a moment. In this lifetime, she didn't know him. Of course, she wouldn't be willing to come with him. Moreover, even if she knew him, based on the degree of hatred she felt for him in their previous lifetime, she would be even less likely to come with him. Li Song just looked at Wei Luo without saying a word. His staring made Wei Luo feel even uneasier.

A long time later, he finally quietly said, "I'm Li Song." After he said this, he clenched his hand around the umbrella as if he was trying to control his emotions. His voice became even quieter as he said, "I... I've been looking for you for a long time."

Wei Luo felt surprised and confused. "Why are you looking for me?"

Li Song raised his eyes to look at her. His eyebrows were slightly low and he looked away from her.

It was only at this moment that Wei Luo discovered he had a very unique birthmark under his eye that resembled a butterfly. The butterfly looked worn out resting underneath his eye and made his face look more unique.

Wei Luo stared at his birthmark while he was lost in thought.

A short while later, Li Song looked at her again. His eyebrows were slightly furrowed and it took a long time before he quietly said, "Don't you want to go inside Duke Ying's residence and be reunited with your family? I'll help you."

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When Lu Shi carried the newly purchased clothes into the residence, he felt puzzled. Why did young master bring home a girl and specially have him buy clothes for her? What was going on? He was with young master every day. Why didn't he know about this person before?

Moreover, young master didn't directly bring her back to Prince Ru Yang's residence. Instead, he had settled her down in another place. Li Song had previously purchased this house to rest here for the occasional times when he was drunk. He must have brought her here because he didn't want Elder Princess Gao Yang and Miss to know about her and cause a huge fuss in Prince Ru Yang's residence. For him to hide her so securely, he definitely treasured her greatly.

Lu Shi knocked on the doors while holding the clothes. The servant girl inside the room partially opened the doors to allow a small gap, took the clothes, and closed the doors.

There had recently been an autumn rain. Young master was worried that the girl would catch a cold and had specially let her to take a hot bath first.

Lu Shi shook his head in front of the doors and tisked. He had never seen young master so worried over another person.

Lu Shu returned to the study and raised his head to look at Li Song. He was standing by the window.

Li Song had already changed into a light purple robe. Noticing that Lu Shi had arrived, he asked without turning his head, "Did you deliver the clothes?"

Lu Shi nodded, "To respond to Young Master, the clothes have been delivered."

Li Song didn't ask further questions.

After about an hour passed, he left the study and arrived at the room that Wei Luo was temporarily staying in. He directly entered the room without having someone announce his arrival.

The room was scented with incense that Li Song often liked to use. He stopped himself from walking past a small divider with a cloisonné center. He looked at the girl that was sitting on the arhat rattan bed. Wei Luo had just finished taking a bath. She was

wearing the cherry blossom pink top and skirt that Lu Shi had bought. A sash that was two palms wide was wrapped around her waist. Her waist was slender and seemed as if it could be held in one hand. Her head was currently lowered as she was drying her black hair that was hanging down on one side and her slender, white as snow neck was exposed. The side of her face was exquisitely beautiful. Her eyelashes were long and curling upwards. It was only in moments like these that she looked an especially obedient doll that had been carved from jade.

Li Song stared at her. It felt as if he could never look at her enough.

Wei Luo saw a pair of ink-black shoes embroidered in golden thread appear on the ground. When she raised her head to look, she was faced with Li Song's unfathomable black eyes.

Wei Luo put down the towel in her hands and slowly straightened her posture. She thought for a moment before asking, "What did you recent words mean?"

He had recently said he would help her reunite with her family, but as for why would he do this... Wei Luo was sure that they had never met. So, what was his reason?

Li Song didn't move. He looked at her and said, "My younger sister is engaged to Duke Ying's family's Sixth Young Master."

His seemingly nonsensical words made Wei Luo stiffen her back. She naturally knew who Duke Ying's Sixth Young Master was. He was her younger brother, Wei Chang Hong. She had hovered outside Duke Ying's residence for several days, but she still hadn't seen him even once. How was he right now? They had been separated for so long. Did Chang Hong still remember his older sister?

Li Song added, "Li Xiang doesn't want to marry Wei Chang Hong. It won't be easy to cancel the engagement. The only way is to start with Du-shi. If Du-shi's moral conduct is dishonorable and has a



malevolent heart, then Prince Ru Yang's household will have an excuse to cancel this engagement."

Wei Luo wasn't stupid. Although she had lived in a village for ten years, her mind was still clever. "How do you know that Du-shi's moral conduct is dishonorable? How do you know about my past?"

Li Song was silent for a moment. His bottomless black eyes looked at her. There were many emotions hidden in his eyes. In the end, it morphed into one sentence, "I know everything about you."

Wei Luo, "..."

A servant girl came into the room to bring a bottle of ointment that would improve circulation. She left the room after bring the bottle to Li Song with her head lowered.

Li Song waited until Wei Luo had finished drying her hair. Then, he sat down next to her, raised his leg, placed her wrist on his knee, poured some of the ointment onto his hand, warmed it up, and gently rubbed the ointment onto Wei Luo's wrist. This was the first time he was calmly touching her wrist and he discovered that her wrist was unspeakably slender compared to his wrist. It felt as if he could break her wrist with a snap. Her body was so delicate. Where had she gotten the strength to stab that hairpin into his body?

Li Song lowered his eyes. After he finished applying the medicine, he still held Wei Luo's wrist.

Wei Luo looked at him. She tried to pull her wrist away, but she didn't succeed.

Wei Luo pursed her lips and called his name, "Li Song?" That seemed to be the name he had recently introduced himself with.

The words, "Li Song", brought him back to his senses. He raised his head. When Wei Luo had called his name in the past, it was always with a tone of disdain or loathing. Her eyes always showed

a deep sense of hatred and bitterness.

Right now, she was right in front of him. Her clear eyes held only held curiosity and confusion. Perhaps, it was because she had just finished taking a bath. Her cheeks were rosy and her entire body exuded a faint fragrance. Li Song's pupils narrowed. He tightened his hold on her wrist.

## Chapter 170.4

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Wei Luo's furrowed her eyebrows and reminded him, "My wrist..." Although she was thankful to him for applying the medicine, she couldn't let him keep holding onto her wrist.

However, before she could finish speaking, Li Song pressed her down onto the bed in the next second.

One of Li Song's hands was by the side of her face to brace himself over her and the other hand was tenaciously holding onto her wrist. With a calm face, he called out, "Wei Luo."

Wei Luo tilted her head to look at the face above her. When she tried to wiggle away, her body was restraint even more. She asked, "What are you doing? Let go of me."

Li Song didn't let her go. He stared at her for a long time before leaning down and slowly embracing her entire body until his face was carefully touching her face. He had longed for this intimate touch for too long. Even though she was right in his arms, he couldn't believe this was real. She was so delicate and small. As it turned out, this is what hugging her felt like. Li Song sucked the bottom of her exquisite earlobe and very carefully kept licking it in small circles.

Half of Wei Luo's body felt numb from his licking. She stretched her hand out to push him away. However, no matter how hard she pushed, she couldn't push him away. Inevitably, she yelled in anger and annoyance, "Let go of me!"

Unexpectedly, Li Song suddenly viciously bit her earlobe. Wei Luo was caught off guard. She yelped and tears came out from her eyes because of the pain.

After Li Song bit her, he still kept the tip of her earlobe in his mouth and gently licked it to comfort her and to also comfort himself.

At this point, Wei Luo didn't dare to move. She was scared that he would suddenly do something crazy like biting her again.

Li Song's arms gradually tightened around her as he let go her earlobe. He lowered his forehead into the space between her neck and shoulder and slowly said, "I'll help you deal with Du-shi so that you can return to Duke Ying's residence... In return, marry me."

Wei Luo's eyes widened until they were circles. Perhaps, this person was mentally ill. Flustered, she tried pushing him away again. "You... What are you saying?! Why?"

Li Song allowed her to push him, but he still tightly held her and didn't budge at all. He said, "There's no reason."

He wanted her. He really wanted her. He had thought about her for two lifetimes.

How could Wei Luo possibly agree? After she had escaped from Long Shou Village, she had a phobia towards marriage. Besides, she didn't even know this person. Who would agree to marry a total stranger? Wei Luo treated it as if there was something wrong with his brain. After struggling for a long time, she finally escaped from underneath his body and avoided him by sitting in the far corner of the arhat bed. She drew her clothes together and watched him with vigilance.

Wei Luo bit her lip and said, "I want to leave."

Li Song slowly sat up. There wasn't any change to his expression. He asked, "Where can you go? Do you have any place to stay in the capital?" He looked at the young girl across from him and saw that her face had turned white as expected. His heart softened without reason and he added, "Just stay here for the next few days. If you need anything, tell Lu Shi. He'll listen to your orders." After saying this, he quietly sat there for a short period of time before standing up and leaving.

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Li Song was right. Wei Luo didn't have anywhere else to go.

On the way from Long Shou Village to the capital, she had already used up her money for traveling expenses. It was already good enough if didn't go hungry each day, much less have a place to stay. Before meeting Li Song, her days had been rough. During the past few days of staying at Li Song's house, she had servant girls to help dress in the morning, ate sumptuous meals at lunchtime, and took hot baths at night. Her life was so comfortable that she felt rather uneasy.

When she woke up every morning, she thought of Li Song's words.

Why did he want to marry her? She had heard from the servants that he was Prince Ru Yang's heir. Then, why did he become interested in her? Wei Luo couldn't figure out the answer.

During this period, Li Song frequently came here. Although he didn't say much, Wei Luo knew that he was waiting for her answer. When he looked at her with his profound, pitch-black eyes, that gaze... It made Wei Luo feel a sense of desolateness for an inexplicable reason.

She couldn't describe what he was feeling. It seemed as if he had very complicated feelings towards her. There was love and there was also hate. But, when she compared the amount of hate with the amount of love, the amount of hate was clearly insignificant. Wei Luo felt even more confused. They had only seen each other twice before he invited her to stay here. There was no reason for him to feel this way, right?

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Wei Luo had stayed here for several days. After she finished dinner, Li Song came by.

Wei Luo was just about to go look for him. He had come at the

right time. She sat up from the arhat bed and said, “I... I have something I want to say to you.”

Li Song didn't sit down. He looked at her and asked, “Have you thought about your answer?”

Wei Luo blinked, “En?”

He asked, “Will you marry me?”

Wei Luo's face suddenly turned red. She looked away from him and said, “That's not what I want to talk about.”

Li Song stayed silent.

Wei Luo paused and said the words that had been fermenting in her heart, “Thank you very much for letting me stay here during the past several days. But, I can't keep staying here. If you agree, I'll leave here today. I feel embarrassed that I bothered you for so many days. I'll definitely come back on another day to thank you.”

A long time after Wei Luo had finished these words, Li Song still hadn't said a single word.

Wei Luo raised her eyes to look at him and repeated, “I want to leave.”

Seeing that he still wasn't showing a reaction, Wei Luo treated it as if he had tacitly agreed. Wei Luo stood up from the arhat bed. Just as she was walking around Li Song, he unexpectedly suddenly stopped her by leaning over and heavily pushing her down onto the arhat bed.

Wei Luo only had time to say, “You...”, before Li Song fiercely blocked her mouth. He sucked and nipped her lips. He wouldn't give her the chance to speak, much less allow her to leave.

Li Song was remarkably like a wolf that had been starving for a long time. After seizing Wei Luo's lips, he wouldn't let go. He forcefully opened her teeth and barged into her mouth to capture her wildly moving tongue in one bite.

Wei Luo couldn't successfully resist against these aggressive actions at all. After she struggled for a long time, she gradually softened and fell into his arms to pitifully whimper.

A long time later, Li Song finally stopped, but he didn't let go of her. He slowly and gently kissed the corners of her lips, chin, and every spot on her face. Li Song's breathing became heavy and his voice was slow and hoarse as he said, "What will you use to thank me?"

## Chapter 170.5

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He had just kissed her eyelids. It felt itchy, so she tried to move backwards. She carefully thought the question over. She really didn't have anything to give him in return.

Li Song asked, "En?"

Wei Luo said, "I'll go to Qian Temple to burn incense for you and pray to the bodhisattva to bless you with longevity."

Li Song cracked his lips into a smile. He felt delight bubbling upwards from the bottom of his heart. In the previous lifetime, Wei Luo would rather die than say such cute words. He used one hand to grasp her chin and looked at her with a smile. "I don't need those unnecessarily superstitions. Wei Luo, you know what I want."

Wei Luo swiftly looked away. "I don't know."

Li Song lowered his head to kiss her lips. "What about now?"

Wei Luo covered her lips, fiercely glared at him, and angrily rebuked, "Pervert!" She finally said what she had been wanting to say.

Li Song didn't object to this. He had wanted to kiss her for a long time. He didn't just want to kiss her. There were many other things that he wanted to do. Li Song stopped leaning over her body, sat down by her side, and adjusted the bottom part of his robe. "You won't be able to do anything if you leave here. Consider my condition. I'll do my best to help you if you agree."

Wei Luo pursed her lips. Her lips tasted entirely of him. She felt slightly uneasy. "I don't want to marry you."

Li Song's expression sank and he didn't say another word.

After the time it would take to burn a stick of incense, Li Song left the room. He specially ordered Lu Shi to watch over Wei Luo



and to not allow her to leave the house.

He had been waiting for information during the past period. The people he ordered to investigate Du-shi finally found useful information. Du-shi had indeed ordered people to look for Wei Luo. As soon as those people found Wei Luo, Du-shi definitely wouldn't let Wei Luo off. Not only that, Li Song had found out that Wei Luo hadn't been kidnapped ten years ago. Instead, Du-shi had contacted two slavers and sold Wei Luo to them of her own accord. Later on, Wei Luo was able to escape from those slavers.

As it turned out, this world was extremely different from the world that he was familiar with. No wonder, so many things were different in this world.

Li Song said to Lu Shi, "Capture those two servant girls. They'll be useful for later."

The two servant girls' names were Jin Ci and Jin Ge. They had served Wei Luo back then. They were also witnesses to Du-shi selling Wei Luo off to those slavers.

Lu Shi nodded and verbally acknowledged the order.

Li Song temporarily returned to Prince Ru Yang's residence. He had to carefully consider Li Xiang and Wei Chang Hong's engagement. If Wei Luo was reunited with her family, then she would become Duke Ying's family's Fifth Miss. In the noble families, sister-in-laws and brother-in-laws weren't allowed to marry each other. If Li Xiang married into Duke Ying's family, then he and Wei Luo would never be able marry.

However, Li Song didn't expect that after he left the house, Wei Luo would have already left by the next time he returned to this house again.

The servant girl that had been serving Wei Luo was kneeling on the ground as she said, "Young Master, please forgive me. This servant was negligent. Miss Wei escaped in the middle of the night

when this servant was sleeping...”

There wasn't any expression on Li Song's face. He was silent for a long time before telling the servant girls to withdraw from the room. He went into the inner room and lied down on the bed.

Lying down on Wei Luo's arhat bed, he thought about everything that had happened recently. The past period had felt like a dream. It had felt too unreal. Now that Wei Luo left, he actually felt a sense of realism. This hateful girl. No matter which world they were in, she wouldn't let him have his way, much less give him a chance.

He had found her before Zhao Jie in this lifetime. He hadn't pushed Wei Chang Hong into the lake. Li Xiang hadn't shot him with an arrow. Why was she still unwilling to stay with him?

Li Song thought about this until he got a headache. He gradually fell asleep on the arhat bed. When he opened his eyes again, it was the next morning.

He stayed lying on the bed for a while before he was fully conscious. Then, he washed his face and changed his clothes. Afterwards, he sent people to Duke Ying's residence to check the situation. After receiving the news that Wei Luo hadn't returned to Duke Ying's residence, his mood was slightly complicated. He didn't know if he was feeling glad or feeling worried. She was all alone and without any money. Where could she go?

What if she met with danger while she was outside?

Thinking of this, Li Song's expression immediately sunk. He had almost forgotten that Du-shi's people were also looking for Wei Luo and they might even kill her. Li Song immediately walked out of the room and ordered Lu Shi, "Send all of the guards to immediately start looking for Wei Luo. They have to thoroughly search the capital. Hurry, if you can't find her, then don't come back!" His expression was severe and anxious. This was the first time that he felt worried over another person.

Lu Shi opened and closed his mouth. He wanted to ask why. But in the end, he didn't ask any question and left after saying, "Understood."

The guards searched for Wei Luo for an entire day. In order to not alarm the ordinary citizens, they could only secretly search and the result wasn't good. By dusk, they still didn't have any news of Wei Luo's location. Li Song's expression became increasingly ugly.

When they came back to report, he kicked one of the guard's stomach and yelled, "Useless!"

Li Song flung his sleeves and strode out of the house. He decided that he would personally search for her.

He searched all of the alleys near Duke Ying's residence, but he didn't find any traces of her. The sky would soon turn dark completely and he still didn't know about Wei Luo's current situation. Li Song tightened his jaw and his fists were clenched so tightly that a cracking sound could be heard. He ordered, "Continue searching."

The guards dispersed as he stood in the dark depths of the alley without moving.

A short while later, a guard hurriedly came back and said, "Young Master, we found her!"

Li Song suddenly raised his head. His visibly bloodshot pitch-black eyes were extremely frightening.

## Chapter 170.6

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While the guards were hurriedly leading Li Song to Wei Luo, she was currently tied to a chair with twine and couldn't move.

Wei Zheng was standing in front of her and Du-shi was sitting in an Eight Immortal Style chair across from her. They arrogantly looked down on her from their higher positions. Wei Zheng was wearing a jade green top and a pomegranate red skirt, but her hand was holding a sharp dagger. The dagger exuded a ghastly luminescence. Wei Zheng waved the dagger in front of Wei Luo and said with a mocking smile, "What right do you have to see my daddy? Wei Luo, you should have died ten years ago. For you to live until now, that was your good luck. It's audaciously daring of you to come back."

Wei Luo raised her eyes to viciously look at her and said, "That's my family. Why can't I come back?"

"Your family?" Wei Zheng covered her mouth and laughed. Her eyes were full of disdain. "Since it's your family, then why doesn't anyone from Duke Ying's family recognize you? Your mother died early and daddy doesn't want you. What's the use in returning here?"

Wei Luo pursed her lips and stayed silent.

Wei Zheng somewhat resentfully looked at Wei Luo's face. She was clearly someone that had been raised by inferior peasantry, but she still looked extremely beautiful. Even though she was wearing simple and coarse clothing, it couldn't diminish the beauty of her face. Wei Zheng raised the dagger and placed it against Wei Luo's face. A vicious light flashed through her eyes. "If your face is ruined, do you think daddy will still be able to recognize you?"

Wei Luo widened her eyes in horror. Her face finally expressed terror.

Wei Zheng was very satisfied. Her wrist lightly moved and the dagger started to slide down Wei Luo's face.

At this exact moment, the wooden doors were slammed open from the outside. A figure strode into the room, snatched the dagger from Wei Zheng's hand, and firmly threw it far away. Li Song icily looked at Wei Zheng and Du-shi and ordered the guards, "Watch them."

The guards surged into the room and quickly surrounded Wei Zheng and Du-shi.

As Li Song untied the rope around Wei Luo, he silently looked at her. He really didn't know what to say to her at this moment, so he only said, "It's okay now."

The fright that Wei Luo had suffered wasn't small. To be honest, she had been scared witless. She didn't know where they had come from. A long time later, she finally said, "How did you find me?"

Li Song paused in his movements and said, "I was worried that something would happen to you, so I started looking for you."

He said these words lightly, but in actuality, over a dozen people had spent the entire day looking for her.

Wei Luo silently stared at him, then she turned to look at the other two people in the room, Wei Zheng and Du-shi.

Li Song followed her line of sight and his gaze turned icy. He picked up the dagger that he had flung to the side, brought it to a guard, and said, "Did you see what she was going to do?"

The guard nodded.

Li Song added, "Good. Do that to her face. If you're not willing to be vicious, then you can pay with your life."

Wei Zheng incredulously widened her eyes until they were circles. She loudly said, "Are you crazy? I'm Duke Ying's family's Sixth Miss. Aren't you scared of offending Duke Ying by doing

this?”

Li Song was leading Wei Luo out of the room. Hearing her words, he turned his head and curved his lips into nonchalant smile, “What’s there to be afraid of?”

Wei Zheng was stunned silent. In that moment, she inexplicably felt that this person was extremely terrifying.

After Wei Luo and Li Song left the room, they quickly heard a painful scream from behind them. It was accompanied by the sound of Du-shi’s wailing cries.

As they were walking out from the alley, Li Song walked in front of her. He knew that she didn’t like it when he was too close to her, so he maintained a distance of three steps away from her during the entire walk.

He said, “I’ve already found out the truth of what happened back then. I’ll deliver the witnesses to Duke Ying’s residence tomorrow. You can return to being Duke Ying’s family’s Fifth Miss. And, you don’t have to worry. Li Xiang and Wei Chang Hong’s engagement has also been canceled. Du-shi and Wei Zheng won’t be a threat to you in the future. Based on Wei Kun’s temperament, he’ll definitely harshly punish those two...” He long-windedly spoke until there was nothing left to say.

He suddenly stopped walking, turned around to look at Wei Luo, and asked, “Is there anything else you need help with?”

Wei Luo looked at him, shook her head, and said, “No.”

Li Song pursed his lips and thought for a moment before saying, “Do you have a place to stay for tonight?”

Wei Luo shook her head again.

He said, “Then, stay at my house. I’ll order people to send you back to Duke Ying’s residence tomorrow.”

After saying this, Li Song ordered Lu Shi to call a carriage over

here to bring Wei Luo back.

Li Song didn't turn to look at her again. His gaze had fallen onto a different spot as he said, "You can go." Then, without waiting for Wei Luo to get into the carriage, he turned around and started to walk away first.

Wei Luo was standing in front of the carriage as she silently looked at Li Song's back figure. She didn't know why, but at this moment, she felt that he looked lonely.

Lu Shi urged her, "Miss Wei?"

Wei Luo didn't respond. She slowly took a step forward. After one step, she paused. Then, without any further hesitation, she walked towards Li Song.

Li Song heard footsteps behind him and he turned his head. He saw Wei Luo with her hands behind her back and standing a few steps away from him.

His eyes sunk, "Why did you follow after me?"

Wei Luo pursed her lips, "Didn't you have a condition for helping me?"

Li Song stared at her without blinking. A long time later, he finally asked word by word, "Wei Luo, what are you saying?"

Wei Luo organized her thoughts before saying, "I can agree to your condition." Although he was slightly strange and wasn't good at expression his emotions, Wei Luo thought that she could try to accept him.

Li Song's heart was palpitating. For a moment, he thought that he had misheard.

His eyes felt slightly itchy. A while later, he suddenly strode towards Wei Luo and tightly hugged her.

Wei Luo felt that his embrace was slightly painful, so she tried moving slightly, but he didn't loosen his grip at all.

Li Song lowered his head so that their faces were touching. It seemed as if he was struggling with himself for a long time before he finally resolutely threatened in a hoarse voice, “Do you know what you’re saying? Even if you regret it now, it’s already too late.”

Wei Luo lightly nodded. Of course, she understood.



# Chapter 171.1

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It was slightly hot during noon. A cool breeze passed through the window's muslin curtains and entered the hot and stuffy room. Zhao Jie was sleeping on an arhat bed that was decoratively carved with dragons for his afternoon nap. One hand was placed over the other and they were both resting on his stomach. Perhaps, he was having an unpleasant dream. His expression was very ugly. His sword-like eyebrows furrowed more and more. In the end, both of his hands clenched into fists and pounded the bed. "Ah Luo!"

The bed made a loud sound and woke Zhao Jie up from his dream.

His forehead was soaked in sweat and his eyes were pitch-black. He slowly sat up from the bed. As he rubbed the area between his eyebrows, he called for a servant.

Hearing Zhao Jie's voice, a young eunuch wearing a light green uniform hurriedly came into the room and respectfully saluted before saying, "Your Majesty."

Zhao Jie said, "Where's the empress?"

The young eunuch said, "To respond to Your Majesty, the empress is currently in the back garden with the crown prince and little princess."

Zhao Jie lowered his eyes and seemed as if he was heavily sighing in relief. A while later, he finally waved his hand and said, "You can withdraw."

The young eunuch bowed and left the room. Zhao Jie's fists clenched tighter before loosening. His black eyes stared at a certain place. He couldn't help remembering his recent dream.

That dream had undoubtedly been Zhao Jie's most terrifying nightmare.

In the dream, neither Zhao Xi nor his younger sister existed.

Zhao Jie also hadn't appeared in the dream. Zhao Jie had watched as little Ah Luo was sold to slavers by Du-shi, as she desperately fled from the slavers, and finally ended in a place called Long Shou Village. He watched as she was forced by her foster parents to marry a ghost, as she staggered to the capital to find her family... And later on... Zhao Jie clenched his fists so tightly that there was a cracking sound. He wasn't willing to remember the things that happened after she arrived in the capital. In the dream, he hadn't been able to will himself into appearing or say any words. He could only watch as Li Song appeared and did the things that he wanted to do. He helped that pitiful and helpless Wei Luo return to her home. He gave her a life of luxury, high rank, and great wealth. In the end, he even married her.

Zhao Jie closed his eyes. That dream had felt too realistic. He couldn't move past the feeling of rage that he had experienced in the dream.

The helplessness and anger that he had felt in the dream remained fresh in his memory. Watching as his precious treasure fall into someone else's hand had felt too real. Zhao Jie walked down from the dragon bed, put on a golden robe that was embroidered with dragons and clouds, and called Zhu Geng and Yang Hao over. Standing by the bed, he said, "Find out Li Song's location. This emperor wants to know where he is right now."

Zhu Geng and Yang Hao were Zhao Jie's imperial bodyguards with high ranks. They would normally stayed close to Zhao Jie. Whenever there was a matter that required confidentiality, Zhao Jie would arrange for the two of them to handle it. When the two of them heard Zhao Jie's order, their first reaction was surprise. After all, Li Song's name hadn't been mentioned by anyone for a long time. Perhaps, most people had already forgotten him. If Zhao Jie hadn't just brought up his name, they would have almost forgotten his existence too.

Zhu Geng and Yang Hao were diligent and conscientious hidden

guards. They quickly overcame that moment of surprise and said, "Understood."

After Zhao Jie stipulated a deadline, he waved his hand to indicate for them to withdraw. He stood by the window for a long time by himself. He remembered the young eunuch's words. Wei Luo and their children were all in the back garden. He didn't think any further before striding over there. Right now, he urgently wanted to see and hug Wei Luo. He wouldn't be able to let go of his worries until he confirmed that she was with him and not Li Song.

---

The capital was slightly stuffy and hot in August, but this heat only lasted during the afternoon. Once it was evening, the temperature became much cooler. When Wei Luo wasn't napping in the afternoon, she liked to take her two children to the garden behind Wu Shuang Hall to play. There was a swing and lattice for flowering vines here. There was also a meandering stream. Zhao Xi and Ran Ran liked to come here the most to play.

When Zhao Jie arrived, Wei Luo was sitting beneath the wisteria lattice to enjoy the cool air. She was holding a baby girl that looked as if she was carved from white jade. The baby girl was wearing a pink jacket and skirt that was embroidered with white butterflies and there was a little hair bun on each side of her head. There was a golden chain hairpin with precious stones inserted into each of the hair buns. She was currently raising her head to babble at Wei Luo. The side of her face looked very similar to Wei Luo's. She had Wei Luo's large eyes, little nose, red lips, and snow-white skin. It was only that one of them was a beautiful, young married woman and the other was cute, young girl.

There was also another child sitting near Wei Luo's legs on the beech couch. Zhao Xi was holding a burr puzzle and seriously moving the pieces back and forth. There were also several other burr puzzles with different shapes by his hands: there were ones shaped like plum blossoms, eight-side ones, twenty-four-sided

ones, and so on.

This little fellow figure out these puzzles very smoothly. It only took him twenty-four moves to disassemble and put back together the burr puzzle that he was playing with. After he finished assembling it, he raised his elegant and exquisite little face and blinked his large, bright and limpid, black eyes. When he smiled, his dimples would be revealed. He brought the burr puzzle in front of Wei Luo to take credit for his achievement, “Mother, I finished. Aren’t I amazing?”

When Zhao Xi had been born, he had resembled Wei Luo. But, as his face matured, he looked quite similar to Zhao Jie.

As Wei Luo looked at the burr puzzle in his hand, she lightly lowered her long eyelashes. Although she was twenty-year-old now, her exquisite and soft skin was still the same as fourteen-year-old girls’. It was as soft and delicate as green onions. She stroked Zhao Xi’s face and praised, “Amazing.”

Zhao Xi’s eyes brightened. His little face gradually revealed a bit of pride. He expectantly asked, “More amazing than imperial father?”

In the eyes of three and a half year old Zhao Xi, imperial father was the most amazing person in the world. Countless court officials and ordinary citizens would obey his words just from him moving his lips. His words were all-powerful and no one dared to voice dissenting opinions. Zhao Xi thought that his imperial father could even call forth the wind and summon the rain without any problems.

Wei Luo chuckled. She coaxed him, “Xi-er’s amazingness is different from your imperial father’s. Xi-er is very amazing. Your imperial father is also very amazing. But, Xi-er is young right now. Wait until you grow up, then compare yourself to your imperial father to see who’s more amazing.

Zhao Xi immediately dropped the burr puzzle and climbed onto

Wei Luo's lap. One hand held his younger sister's soft and chubby little hand and the other hand held his mother's hand. He said, "When I grow up and become more amazing than imperial father, can I hold younger sister?"

He was too young and didn't have sufficient strength to hold Ran Ran properly. Wei Luo was worried that he would accidentally drop her, so she rarely let him hold Ran Ran. But, he constantly thought about it. He whole-heartedly wanted to hold his rosy-cheeked young sister that resembled a rice ball.

Wei Luo said, "Of course."

Zhao Xi was overjoyed.

## Chapter 171.2

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The two little children were face to face as they babbled with each other in high spirits. One child was sitting on Wei Luo's lap and the other child was lying down by Wei Luo's legs. Ran Ran had just turned one year old and only knew simple words. She had a very obedient temperament and was slightly shy. When outsiders tried to play with her, she wouldn't say much. But, in front of her parents and older brother, she would frequently laugh happily. Right now, with Zhao Xi playing with her, her limpid, almond-shaped eyes were curved into crescent moons as she bit her bottom lip and giggled.

Zhao Xi held Ran Ran's hand and asked Wei Luo, "Mommy, can I bring younger sister with me to pick grapes? I'll peel the ripe grapes for her."

Ran Ran hadn't learned how to walk yet. She was only able to stumble along a few steps when there was an adult to hold her hand. Most of the time she would totter a few steps before falling against Wei Luo's leg. And so, Wei Luo was slightly worried. She thought for a moment before saying, "Let Jin Lu accompany the two of you. Be careful, don't let your younger sister fall."

A year ago, Wei Luo had made the decision to find husbands for her servant girls. Bai Lan had been married off, but Jin Lu refused to leave and continued to serve at Wei Luo's side. By now, Jin Lu was considered an old maid. Wei Luo didn't want to continue delaying her marriage and had recently started looking for a good marriage partner for her. Wei Luo had taken note that whenever Zhu Geng came over with Zhao Jie, his gaze would always intentionally or otherwise fall on Jin Lu. However, Jin Lu would always lower her head and not look back. Wei Luo had paid attention to all of this and an idea had almost formed in her mind.

Wei Luo had taken note that whenever Zhu Geng came over with Zhao Jie, his gaze would always intentionally or otherwise fall on

Jin Lu. However, Jin Lu would always lower her head and not look back. Wei Luo had paid attention to all of this and an idea had almost formed in her mind.

Right now, Jin Lu was carrying Ran Ran and walking with Zhao Xi towards the grape lattice that was across from the wisteria lattice.

After only taking a few steps, Zhao Xi raised his head and saw the person standing by the banana tree. He retracted the smile on his face and immediately showed a proper, serious expression. He quickly walked to Zhao Jie and greeted, "Imperial father."

Although Zhao Xi was mischievous and lively, he revered Zhao Jie from the bottom of his heart. He could act cutely spoiled and show off in front of Wei Luo. But, he could also curb his natural tendencies in front of Zhao Jie and change his demeanor into a straightforward and composed one. Moreover, he didn't dare to be so sticky with his mother when Zhao Jie was around. Because if he did that, Zhao Jie would look at him with a cold and threatening gaze. This gaze made him feel odd and it also made him want to timidly retreat.

Later on, Zhao Xi finally found out that it was because his imperial father had been very jealous over what happened when he was recently born. During that period, his mother had always been holding him and wholeheartedly only caring about him. And so, even now, his imperial father would still feel jealous and that was why he would look at him with that expression.

Zhao Jie nodded and asked, "Where are you going?"

Zhao Xi pointed at the grape trellis. "I'm bringing younger sister to pick grapes over there. Younger sister likes to eat grapes."

Zhao Jie looked at the rosy-cheeked rice ball that Jin Lu was carrying. In comparison to his gaze when he had been looking at Zhao Xi, his expression was much gentler when he looked at Ran Ran. Perhaps, it was because Ran Ran looked similar to Wei Luo, so

he would frequently hug and hold her. Today was the same. He took Ran Ran from Jin Lu and scratched her little nose while holding her in his arms. He curved his lips and said a few words to little Ran Ran.

Little Ran Ran didn't understand what he was saying. She only knew how to softly and sweetly call him, "Daddy." The milky scent from her body diluted Zhao Jie's recently irritable and anxious feelings and let him gradually calm down.

Zhao Jie asked, "Does Ran Ran like eat grapes?"

Little Ran Ran blinked her large eyes. It took a while for her pink, pouty lips to stammer out, "L-like... eat... eat"

Zhao Jie chuckled. He kissed her cheeks, "You're the same as your mother. You're both gluttonous."

Little Ran Ran quietly said, "Oh." She only understood one of the words that he had said, "mother". But, seeing daddy laughed, she also started laughing and revealed two baby milk teeth. She spread her hands and mimicked his words, "Mother... gluttonous."

After the father and daughter talked for a bit, as Zhao Jie was about to hand Ran Ran over to Jin Lu, he happened to lower his head and see the other little white radish.

Zhao Xi had raised his little face to watch them. Although he didn't say anything, his large eyes exuded his hopeful expectation. His little mouth was slightly pursed and revealed a trace of a smile. He was probably thinking that his younger sister was too cute and couldn't help smiling along with her. When Zhao Xi's eyes met Zhao Jie's, he blankly stared for a moment before putting back the solemn expression on his little face. He obediently called out, "Imperial father."

Zhao Jie slightly paused in his movement, then he said, "You can go play."

"En." Zhao Xi nodded and led Jin Lu and Ran Ran to the nearby



grape trellis. Although the little fellow hid his feelings well, Zhao Jie still saw the longing in his eyes. He had probably been too harsh towards him during the past few years.

Zhao Xi had only walked two steps before Zhao Jie's voice stopped him again. He turned his head and swiftly walked back, "Imperial father, is there something else?"

Zhao Jie raised his hand, gently rubbed Zhao Xi's head, and warned him, "Be careful, don't eat too many grapes. Otherwise, you'll get a stomachache."

He remembered how Wei Luo had once eaten too many grapes and ended up throwing up after she returned home. In the end, she had to lay in bed for few days before she felt better.

A light flashed through Zhao Xi's large eyes and his little mouth split into a smile. His two deep dimples were showing as he repeatedly nodded, "Will do!"

Zhao Jie lightly smiled, "You can go."

The little fellow ran off while feeling very satisfied. He was so happy that it seemed as if there was wind beneath his steps.

Zhao Jie looked at Zhao Xi's back figure, curved his lips into a smile, and finally turned around to walk towards Wei Luo. Wei Luo was sitting underneath the wisteria trellis and had seen everything. When Zhao Jie reached her side, her tone was slightly distressed as she said, "Don't be so strict towards little watermelon. He's still young. He'll feel bad that you're always hugging Ran Ran, but you never hug him."

Zhao Jie sat down by her side, carried her onto his lap, and held her small hand in his big hand. He said, "He's a boy. It's only right that I act stricter towards him. This is the only way for him to grow up to be an outstanding man."

But, Wei Luo didn't agree. Both of these children were beloved to her and she didn't want either of them to suffer. She really

couldn't stand watching how Zhao Jie was so biased. "That won't do. He's not even four years old yet. He doesn't know anything. He just wants you to hug him sometimes, but you always show a stern face towards him. I feel bad for Xi-er just from looking at him. If you continue this, I'll really get angry."

Then, she deliberated before adding, "I know that you want to train him to be independent earlier. But, isn't this too early? Can't you wait until he's ten years old? Moreover, he's not that clingy anymore. He's only fond of Ran Ran. When Liuli's little Jin-er wanted to play with him, Zhao Xi would put on airs..."

Liuli had given birth to a daughter two years ago. Her nickname was Jin-er. Every time she came to the palace, she would look for Zhao Xi to play with.

## Chapter 171.3

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Zhao Xi's relationship with Jin-er had originally been pretty good. But, the two of them had started arguing for an unknown reason during Jin-er's last visit. Neither of them had spoken to anyone else for several days after. Jin-er also hadn't come to the palace in half a month.

Zhao Xi didn't say anything, but Wei Luo could tell that he definitely missed Jin-er. Because he was young, he was worried about losing face, so he wouldn't ask why Jin-er hadn't been coming to the palace.

Zhao Jie wrapped his arms around Wei Luo and rested his chin against her cheek. He lazily said, "En." He couldn't help laughing before saying, "Okay, I'll do everything that you say. Whatever Ah Luo says is right."

Wei Luo cast a rebuking glance at him.

Zhao Jie inwardly thought that she must be thinking he was acting improper again. He chuckled, rubbed his face against her face, and said, "Isn't it because you treated him too well at the beginning and gave me the cold shoulder for over half a year? I'm still feeling bad over this."

Wei Luo used her elbow to jab his chest. Then, she smiled at him and said, "Big brother, why are you so petty? That was years ago."

Zhao Jie declined to comment. He thought of something else and his phoenix eyes sunk. He slowly said, "When its something related to you... I can't be magnanimous."

Wei Luo didn't reply. She was already used to his pettiness. The corner of her mouth dropped for a moment before she went back to gently smiling.

After a long time passed, Zhao Jie continued to hug Wei Luo. His arms were like metal pliers that tightly surrounded Wei Luo

without loosening.

Feeling uncomfortable, Wei Luo tried to shift around. Finding his behavior strange, she said, “It’s too hot like this. What’s wrong? You seem kind of off today.”

Zhao Jie didn’t move and asked in a low voice, “Ah Luo, would you marry Li Song if you hadn’t met me?”

Wei Luo immediately stopped squirming. She widened her eyes in surprise and tried to turn around to look at Zhao Jie’s expression. Unfortunately, she still couldn’t move her body and could only say, “What did you say?”

Zhao Jie didn’t say a word. He lowered his head to rest his forehead in the spot between her shoulder and neck. He was clearly trying to suppress his emotions. His arms were hugging her tighter and tighter.

Wei Luo noticed that something was wrong. She asked again, “Why are you asking this?”

Zhao Jie was silent for a moment before he told Wei Luo everything that had happened in his dream. Wei Luo incredulously widened her eyes as she listened. She would have never expected that Zhao Jie would dream about her past life. Every aspect of his dream was completely identical to her past experience.

A long time later, Wei Luo recovered from her shock and grasped the important point. “So, you dreamed that I was with Li Song?”

Zhao Jie furrowed his eyebrows. He was unhappy just by hearing that person’s name.

Wei Luo pondered for a moment before bursting out in laughter. She turned around, wrapped her arms around Zhao Jie’s waist, and snuggled her face against his hard chest. “I also had a dream. Big brother, do you want to hear about it?”

Zhao Jie asked, “What dream?”

Wei Luo tirelessly recounted everything, “My dream was very similar to yours. My stepmother sold me to slavers when I was six years old. When I was fifteen years old, I escaped from Long Shou Village and came to the capital...” She thought of her previous life. It felt as if it was something that happened a long time ago. But, because Zhao Jie had mentioned this topic, her memory became clearer.

“But, I didn’t meet Li Song or marry him. I dreamed that Li Xiang and Li Song worked together to ruin Chang Hong’s future career prospects so that Li Xiang could cancel her engagement with him. Later on, I wasn’t able to see daddy even once. Wei Zheng and Du-shi ruined my appearance. And after that, I died.”

After saying everything, she stopped and raised her head to look at Zhao Jie, “Wasn’t the dream me very pitiful?”

Zhao Jie lowered his eyes and tilted her little face with one hand. “Is this why you asked me to take you to Long Shou Village when you were seven years old?”

Wei Luo nodded. Her eyes were full of trust. “I wanted to go there to confirm by seeing if that place was the same as my dream.... Unexpectedly, that village actually existed.” She cuddled in Zhao Jie’s embrace for a few moments. She didn’t forget to comfort him. “How can we treat a dream as reality? Right now, I’m already married to you and gave birth to little watermelon and little Ran Ran. I’ll only be with you in this lifetime. I won’t marry anyone else. There’s no one as good as big brother.”

Zhao Jie turned around while holding her, so that she was straddling him. His forehead touched her forehead. “You have to be with me in the next lifetime too and the lifetime after that one as well.”

Wei Luo pursed her lips and lightly laughed. She nodded.

Zhao Jie pecked her lips, but it wasn’t satisfying enough. So, he sucked her lip, pried open her teeth, and deeply kissed her.

Wei Luo gasped for a moment and slightly retreated. Her eyelashes fluttered as she said, “Xi-er and Ran Ran are still here...”

Zhao Jie hoarsely said, “They can’t see us.”

Zhao Jie gradually swallowed Wei Luo’s protests. As they continued kissing, the two of them became unwilling to separate. From far away, they seemed like one person.

Zhao Xi was holding two large bunches of grapes as he walked back. Just as he was about to wash them before giving them to his mother and father to eat, he stopped after walking a few steps. Zhao Xi looked at the nearby scene of those two people. Imperial father was biting mother’s lip and his upper body was pressing mother down. It seemed as if he was doing a tasting of a rare delicacy. He was eating with great relish.

Mother’s face was flushed and her eyes were closed. She didn’t even notice that he had come back. Zhao Xi looked at them for a moment with his long eyelashes fluttering before he tactfully turned around and ran away.

En, imperial father and mother are in the middle of official business. It’ll be better if he went back to look for his younger sister to play with.

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